NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

WOULD THE U.S. BENEFIT FROM A UNIFIED NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT VIOLENT SALAFI JIHADISM?

by

Lisa M. Palmieri

December 2015

Thesis Advisor: Anders Strindberg
Second Reader: David Brannan

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704–0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (*Leave blank*)	2. REPORT DATE December 2015	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE WOULD THE U.S. BENEFIT FROM A UNIFIED NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT VIOLENT SALAFI JIHADISM?		**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lisa M. Palmieri			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		**10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**	

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB protocol number ____N/A____.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

Violent Salafi jihadism, or VSJ, motivated the September 11 hijackers, but it is poorly understood by homeland security practitioners and not addressed in U.S. national strategies. This thesis argues that using precise language to define this threat is necessary to achieve a common understanding of the VSJ movement and posits that, based on the resources focused on this threat for the past 14 years, a unified national strategy is warranted.

The use of the generic term "terrorism" has resulted in a vast array of counterterrorism "experts," many of whom have little or no understanding of VSJ. An unintended consequence of conflating VSJ with motivation behind other Muslim groups using terrorist tactics is that it feeds the false narrative that VSJ represents Islam. Muslims in Asia and Africa are by far more often victimized by VSJ than is the "far enemy" in Europe and the United States.

This thesis argues that imprecise language referencing the threat from VSJ has led to diluted and sometimes counterproductive, counterterrorism strategies. It also argues that the United States should disaggregate terrorist groups that do not directly threaten the United States and, instead, focus on VSJ with unity of effort across the federal government.

14. SUBJECT TERMS violent Salafi jihadism (VSJ), Salafi jihad, counterterrorism, Wahhabi, countering violent extremism(CVE), radicalization, Islam, Muslim, antiterrorism, terrorism	**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 121
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

WOULD THE U.S. BENEFIT FROM A UNIFIED NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT VIOLENT SALAFI JIHADISM?

Lisa M. Palmieri
Executive Officer, Office of the Chief Intelligence Officer,
Office of Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security
B.A., Plymouth State College, 1984

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2015**

Approved by: Anders Strindberg
Thesis Advisor

David Brannan
Second Reader

Erik Dahl
Associate Chair of Instruction
Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

Violent Salafi jihadism, or VSJ, motivated the September 11 hijackers, but it is poorly understood by homeland security practitioners and not addressed in U.S. national strategies. This thesis argues that using precise language to define this threat is necessary to achieve a common understanding of the VSJ movement and posits that, based on the resources focused on this threat for the past 14 years, a unified national strategy is warranted.

The use of the generic term "terrorism" has resulted in a vast array of counterterrorism "experts," many of whom have little or no understanding of VSJ. An unintended consequence of conflating VSJ with motivation behind other Muslim groups using terrorist tactics is that it feeds the false narrative that VSJ represents Islam. Muslims in Asia and Africa are by far more often victimized by VSJ than is the "far enemy" in Europe and the United States.

This thesis argues that imprecise language referencing the threat from VSJ has led to diluted and sometimes counterproductive, counterterrorism strategies. It also argues that the United States should disaggregate terrorist groups that do not directly threaten the United States and, instead, focus on VSJ with unity of effort across the federal government.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF FIGURES

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADL   Anti-Defamation League

AIEF   American Israel Education Foundation

AIPAC   American-Israel Public Affairs Committee

AQ   al-Qa'ida

AQI   al Qa'ida in Iraq

AQIM   al Qa'ida in the Maghreb

AT   antiterrorism

CIA   Central Intelligence Agency

CRCL   Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

CT   counterterrorism

CVE   countering violent extremism

DHS   Department of Homeland Security

DOD   Department of Defense

DOJ   Department of Justice

DOS   Department of State

ETA   Basque Fatherland and Liberty

FARC   Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia

FBI   Federal Bureau of Investigation

GIA   Groupe Islamique Armé

GSPC   Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat

GWOT   global war on terror

H.R.   House resolution

HSAC   Homeland Security Advisory Council

IRS   Internal Revenue Service

ISIL   Islamic State in the Levant

ISIS   Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

LTTE   Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

MB   Muslim Brotherhood

NMS   National Military Strategy

NSS   National Security Strategy

PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
RIRA	Real Irish Republican Army
VEO	violent extremist organizations
VSJ	violent Salafi jihadism

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States would benefit from a unified national strategy to combat violent Salafi jihadism (VSJ), the ideology that motivated the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. VSJ as a movement is based on an ultraconservative literal interpretation of the Quran that continues to survive the distributed and broad national strategies produced under the auspices of counterterrorism, homeland security, national security, and intelligence. This thesis argues that U.S. efforts to impact both the actual and perceived threat posed by VSJ have been hampered by the lack of a clear focus on, as well as understanding of, what motivates the VSJ adherents who constitute al-Qa'ida (AQ), Daesh,[1] and other such groups that threaten U.S. interests at home and abroad.[2]

There is no reference made to Salafi jihadism (*violent* is implied by referencing "jihadism"), a term coined by Gilles in 2002,[3] by the national strategies reviewed here put forth by the White House, the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of State. This, despite the fact that the major incidents regularly cited in discussions about terror attacks on the U.S. and its interests routinely highlight the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole*, and the 9/11 attacks—all committed by VSJ adherents. There have also been less sophisticated or failed attacks inspired by VSJ, such as the Ft. Hood shootings, the Time Square plot, the plot to bomb the New York City subway system, and a myriad of others. In U.S. strategies, AQ has been put on par with adversaries far more capable and dangerous, both

---

[1] Daesh is an Arabic word for the entity known in English as the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

[2] Due to the inconsistent references and spelling of both groups across government documents and literature, this thesis uses "AQ" when discussing al Qa'ida, and "Daesh" when discussing ISIL/ISIS. The use of the pejorative name "Daesh" emphasizes the point of this thesis, which is that allowing violent Salafi jihadism to represent Islam by referencing to adherents as the "Islamic State" provides them cache that is self-defeating for the U.S. and feeds their narrative, to be discussed later.

[3] Gilles Kepel, and Anthony F. Roberts *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 220.

inside and outside the U.S.[4] Despite the lack of precision when discussing VSJ, when the U.S. refers to the "terrorist threat," this is the movement being discussed.

This thesis provides the reader an overview of Islam and Islamism as a foundation for understanding Salafism, if only to provide context as to what VSJ is and, perhaps more importantly, what it is not. Additionally, it explains the evolution and history of VSJ, as well as related factors of takfir and Wahhabism, and contrasts the threat posed by VSJ with definitions and language currently used in national strategies. A disaggregation of the various subgroups under Islam, even the relatively small percentage that commit terrorist acts, is key to moving towards workable and targeted solutions, as is understanding that Muslims are the primary victims of VSJ. Understanding the intricacies of the violent Salafi jihadi ideology and the diversity of its adherents, why the U.S. is in the crosshairs, and how VSJ relates to the global geo-political environment is necessary in order to turn the tide on what appears to be an intractable conflict.

The doctrinal "bins" that inform how the U.S. combats and engages with VSJ are defined as counterterrorism, anti-terrorism, and countering violent extremism. These terms are used loosely across government at all levels in the U.S.; however, based on available documents, they do not provide a holistic framework for addressing the threat from VSJ. Currently, no single government agency is responsible for defining, understanding, and framing the VSJ threat for the U.S. In general terms, counterterrorism and anti-terrorism mean, respectively, offensively combating groups committing terrorist acts and defending against the damage terrorist tactics can inflict.[5] This terminology does not discriminate among different groups that use terrorist tactics, simply defined as "politically motivated crime intended to modify the behavior of a target audience."[6] Understanding the ideology and motivation is not part of the U.S. strategies reviewed for this thesis, which argues that differentiating between terrorist groups, in general, and

---

[4] White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2015), i.

[5] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterterrorism* (Joint Publication 3-26) (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), iii.

[6] Paul B. Davis, and Leonard B. Weinberg, *Introduction to Political Terrorism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 6.

between those using the banner of Islam, specifically, is key to productive strategy. The U.S. government has multiple official definitions of terrorism, which does not support the development of a unifying strategic position to combat VSJ.

Despite significant tactical successes against AQ and Daesh, U.S. counterterrorism strategies have had little measurable impact on VSJ adherents' ability to recruit worldwide or on their interest in using violence to achieve their goals. According to Nadav Morag, "In fighting terrorism…the eradication of terrorist cells, the decapitation of the terrorist leadership, the blocking of terrorist funds, or the destruction of terrorist safe havens do not necessarily (and, in fact, rarely) result in the cessation of terrorist violence."[7] While the primary reliance on military and law enforcement tools may be one challenge to achieving strategic success, distributed national strategies that do not focus on VSJ pose a significant hurdle to defeating this poorly understood adversary. The U.S. needs to develop a common understanding, starting with precise language to reference the threat. This should set the stage for a unity of effort at the federal level, beginning with a national strategy, to strategically impact VSJ.

The lack of reference to the term Salafi jihadi across multiple national strategies is primarily due to the lack of a common understanding of what the ideology is and the inability to clearly communicate who adheres to it (and who does not). There is a need for a whole of government approach to assess how to best minimize or eradicate this threat. Coining and using the term "violent Salafi jihadism" (VSJ) is a start; this emphasizes the violent nature of this movement to policymakers unfamiliar with Salafism in a broader context. Hard power strategies eliminating key adversaries and funding streams need to be bolstered by broader strategies that will affect the continued recruitment to and spread of this ideology.

---

[7] Nadav Morag, "Measuring Success in Coping with Terrorism: The Israeli Case," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 4 (2005): 307.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I.   INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to answer the question of whether the United States would benefit from a unified national strategy to combat violent Salafi jihadism (VSJ[1]), the ideology that motivated the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. VSJ as a movement continues to survive the distributed and broad national strategies produced under the auspices of counterterrorism, homeland security, national security, and intelligence. This thesis argues that U.S. efforts to impact both the actual and perceived threat posed by VSJ have been hampered by the lack of a clear focus on, as well as an understanding of, what motivates the VSJ adherents who constitute al-Qa'ida (AQ) and Daesh[2] and threaten U.S. interests at home and abroad.[3] This thesis posits that a focused, unified national strategy would be more effective than the current distributed strategies in four ways:

- Establish a common understanding of VSJ and its focus on the U.S.

- Set more precise language or common lexicon reflecting an improved understanding of that threat.

- Ensure that the strategy is focused on this limited but significant threat specifically and effectively.

- Provide commander's intent demanding a "whole of government" effort focused on the VSJ threat that would in turn guide implementation of a national strategy across all agencies.

There is no reference made to Salafi jihadism by the national strategies reviewed here, put forth by the White House, the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of State. This, despite the fact that the major incidents regularly cited in discussions about terror attacks on the U.S. and its interests routinely

---

[1] The J in VSJ will be used to reference *jihadism* only; other variations (*jihadi*, *jihadist*) will be spelled out.

[2] The Arabic word used for the entity known in English as the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

[3] Due to the inconsistent references and spelling of both groups across government documents and literature, this thesis will utilize "AQ" when discussing al Qa'ida, and "Daesh" when discussing ISIL/ISIS. The use of the pejorative name "Daesh" emphasizes the point of this thesis, which is that allowing violent Salafi jihadism to represent Islam by referencing to adherents as the "Islamic State" provides them cache that is self-defeating for the U.S. and feeds their narrative, to be discussed later.

highlight the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole*, and the 9/11 attacks, all committed by VSJ adherents. In addition, there have been less sophisticated or failed attacks, such as the Ft. Hood shootings, the Time Square plot, the plot to bomb the New York City subway system, and a myriad of others inspired by VSJ. In U.S. strategies, AQ has been called an "evil that is intent on threatening and destroying our basic freedoms and our way of life;"[4] it is put on par with threats posed by Russian expansionism, climate change, pandemic disease, and those which impact U.S. cyber infrastructure.[5] Despite the lack of precision when discussing VSJ, when the U.S. refers to the "terrorist threat," this is the movement being discussed.

Gilles Kepel, who coined the term "Salafi jihadism," describes VSJ followers as puritans willing to use violence describing them as having "supercilious respect for the sacred texts in their most literal form…with an absolute commitment to jihad."[6] VSJ advocates the establishment of a "global caliphate" and accepts "takfir," which they use to justify expulsion or murder of anyone who does not adhere to their extremist ideology. This thesis argues that, while the term "Salafi jihadism" is accepted and understood in academic and some journalistic circles, it has not gained traction in policy discourse at the national level. Adding the descriptor "violent" may aid in making this more acceptable despite the sensitivity of mentioning a religion in a negative context. This is addressed in more detail in Chapter III.

This thesis provides the reader an overview of Islam and Islamism as a foundation for understanding Salafism, if only to provide context as to what violent Salafi jihadism is, and perhaps more importantly, what it is not. Additionally, it describes the evolution and history of VSJ, as well as related factors of takfir and Wahhabism, and contrasts the threat posed by VSJ with definitions and language currently used in national strategies. A disaggregation of the diverse subgroups under Islam, most of them non-violent, is key to

---

[4] White House, *National Strategy for Countering Terrorism* (Washington, DC: White House, 2003), 1.

[5] White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2015), i.

[6] Gilles Kepel, and Anthony F. Roberts *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 220.

moving towards workable and targeted solutions, as is understanding who in the Muslim world suffers because of VSJ. Understanding the intricacies of the violent Salafi jihadi ideology and the diversity of its adherents, why the U.S. is in the crosshairs, and how VSJ relates to the global geo-political environment is necessary in order to turn the tide on what appears to be an intractable conflict.

One of the impediments to combating the violent Salafi jihadi threat is the failure to define and understand what it is, and conversely, what it is not. The term "counterterrorism" appears prominently in various national strategies. Depending on the immediate context, "counterterrorism" can refer to a variety of groups, motivated by a variety of factors. Specificity is required; words matter. Both the Bush and the Obama administrations made efforts to be more specific with language, with limited success, for reasons addressed in later chapters. The evolution of these efforts has resulted in fallback language in all of the strategies referencing "al Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents," or even less specific, "the terrorists," but valuable clarity can be gained by calling it what it is: violent Salafi jihadism.

Specific violent Salafi jihadi aligned groups may come and go; the undercurrent of these groups is the fringe, radical, violent Salafist movement targeting the U.S., which continues to appeal to new recruits. The success of recruitment efforts to attract new adherents to VSJ has been at the root of contentious political discussion. While the U.S. government can point to significant tactical successes against AQ over the past decade, the overall impact on VSJ and the capabilities of its adherents is another issue. To make the point, Daesh, which is currently terrorizing civilian populations in Syria and Iraq and recruiting new fighters from the West, adheres to VSJ; this threat is broader than AQ. In fact, the number of violent Salafi jihadi groups has increased over the past 25 years, from three in 1988 to an estimated 49 in 2013.[7] A unified national strategy, under which various federal agencies can operate, should address the ideology and movement using precise language, as opposed to focusing on any one group.

---

[7] Seth G. Jones, *A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of Al Qa'ida and Other Salafi Jihadists* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2014), http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR637, 27.

It is standard practice in government circles to use certain shorthand language for complex issues; this enables compressed discussions among those "in the know." This is true for many different areas of expertise but is very specific to government disciplines. Military, diplomacy, and law enforcement each has its own way of communicating that to the outside observer may not make sense. An example of this is the term "TOC" or "TCO" referring to transnational organized crime or transnational criminal organizations. Individuals working these issues in the government know exactly what type of activity is referenced just by the acronym. This is not the case relative to the threat posed by VSJ adherents that the U.S. has faced over the past decades. The lack of a common understanding of VSJ has left the U.S. without a lexicon to clearly define what it is and develop and implement a strategy to deal with it in a comprehensive way. Because there is no common understanding, and therefore no common language, the shorthand that has evolved over time has actually impeded developing a common understanding. Words like "counterterrorism" (CT), "anti-terrorism" (AT), and even just "terrorism" mean different things to different organizations at the federal level in the context of an agency's mission and erode what should be that nuanced or "expert" understanding of this particular threat. The expectations of what expertise is needed in this area have been diffused along with the language.

Since 2001, government agencies have made attempts to refine the language used to refer to the threat that manifested on September 11, 2001. The *New York Times* reported in 2005 that the problem was pervasive across the federal government: "Understanding the enemy starts with what to call it. The 9/11 commission talks of 'Islamist terrorists.' The Central Intelligence Agency calls them 'Islamic extremists.' The United States Institute of Peace refers to 'Islamist militants.' And neoconservatives call them 'Islamo-fascists.'"[8] This underscores the need for a commonly understood lexicon that is specific to VSJ, without which there is the danger of sweeping more people into the "out group," and potentially increasing the real or perceived strength of the adversary. Without a common lexicon, there is also a significant chance that policymakers will not

---

[8] Bruce Stokes, "Next Steps on Terrorism? No Consensus," *National Journal* 37, no. 37 (2005): 2764–2765.

truly understand this threat, and national interests will be impacted by poor, weak, or counterproductive strategies.

A lack of concentration, in addition to focus, has undermined U.S. national strategies related to counterterrorism. In an article discussing President Obama's counterterrorism doctrine, Rohde references Bruce Hoffman's comments as to its haphazard nature, noting,

> The United States focused its effort on Afghanistan in 2001, shifted to Iraq in 2003, returned to Afghanistan in 2009. Now, Obama announced a shift from Afghanistan to Syria. "It continues our pathology," Hoffman said. "Our attention has shifted from one trouble spot to another with disastrous results."[9]

This pattern seems to have continued with the evolution of the civil war in Syria that has given birth to Daesh, and the current conflict in Yemen where the U.S. is supporting Saudi Arabia's fight against the Shia Houthi in a geopolitical chess match against much feared Iranian influence. The U.S. government seems to have trouble establishing its own long-term strategy for that region of the world, and the resulting lack of clarity distracts from the movement that the U.S. is ostensibly focused on: VSJ. What is needed is something beyond counterterrorism (military/law enforcement offense) and beyond antiterrorism (military/law enforcement defense). What is needed is a rational, thoughtful, informed plan specific to the particular threat that, up to now, has cost the U.S. billions of taxpayer dollars in support of a "homeland security industrial complex"[10] and has had questionable impact on VSJ.

Americans continue to suffer from fear and anxiety in relation to terrorism. A recent Gallup Poll showed that in March of 2015, 51 percent of Americans surveyed worried "a great deal" about terrorism.[11] This indicates that, in fact, VSJ is

---

[9] David Rohde, "Obama's Counterterrorism Doctrine: Let Locals Lead the Fight," Reuters, June 4, 2014, sec. World.

[10] Christopher Bellavita, "Changing Homeland Security: Ten Essential Homeland Security Books," *Homeland Security Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2007): 5.

[11] Justin McCarthy, "In U.S., Worries about Terrorism, Race Relations up Sharply," Gallup, March 17, 2015. http://www.gallup.com/poll/182018/worries-terrorism-race-relations-sharply.aspx.

accomplishing at least part of the goal to terrorize America, the "far enemy."[12] The lack of a clear national strategy to counter this threat contributes to a general undercurrent of anxiety and insecurity, echoed in daily news reports, which amplify both. This particular movement has been able to project what some consider an "existential threat"[13] to the most powerful country in the world, partly due to the failure of the U.S. to portray it in a proportional and realistic manner. This would be a key part of a unified national strategy: to reflect that while violent Salafi jihadis have clearly have expressed the intent, they lack the capability to bring down the United States of America. The threat they pose is measurable and manageable and may be susceptible to solid, targeted, holistic strategy, including a more resilient and even-handed response. This message needs to be clear.

The fact that the national strategies reviewed for this thesis discuss counterterrorism either in broad terms, or with respect to a diverse set of specific organizations or groups, distract from the fact that VSJ poses a limited but significant terrorist threat to the U.S. and must be dealt with accordingly. Some of the strategies reviewed are vague, discussing counterterrorism in a broad manner that undermines the focus and effectiveness of the strategy. The lack of precise language opens the door for politicization of content, such as the inclusion of groups using terrorist tactics anywhere in the world, regardless of the direct or significant threat posed to the U.S.

The doctrinal "bins" that inform how the U.S. refers to VSJ are counterterrorism, anti-terrorism, and countering violent extremism. These terms are used loosely across government at all levels in the U.S.; however, based on available documents, they do not provide a holistic framework for addressing the threat from VSJ. Currently, no single government agency is responsible for defining, understanding, and framing the VSJ threat for the U.S. In general terms, counterterrorism and anti-terrorism mean, respectively, offensively combating groups committing terrorist acts and defending against the damage terrorist tactics can inflict.[14] This terminology does not discriminate

---

[12] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[13] Jonathan Stevenson, "Pragmatic Counter-Terrorism," *Survival* 43, no. 4 (2001): 42.

[14] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterterrorism* (Joint Publication 3-26) (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), iii.

among different groups that use terrorist tactics, simply defined as "politically motivated crime intended to modify the behavior of a target audience."[15]

The U.S. government has multiple official definitions of terrorism. The Department of Defense defines terrorism as "the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological."[16] For federal law enforcement purposes, terrorism is defined by law as an offense that:

> Is calculated to influence or affect the conduct of government by intimidation or coercion, or to retaliate against government conduct; and is a violation of one of several listed statutes, including § 930(c) (relating to killing or attempted killing during an attack on a federal facility with a dangerous weapon); and § 1114 (relating to killing or attempted killing of officers and employees of the U.S.).[17]

The purpose of that definition is to facilitate criminal charges and prosecution based on terrorist acts. The Intelligence Community defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."[18] This is a bit broader and used to guide intelligence operations and analysis against individuals and groups overseas.

U.S. history is rich with references to terrorism from the very beginning, including massacres of Native Americans, actions of Ku Klux Klan, and attacks perpetrated by anarchists and other groups during the twentieth century,[19] as well as more recent attacks, such as the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. This alone undermines the utility of using the term in discourse, which lends itself to conflating the threats from different groups and ideologies into one, amorphous "terrorist threat." The use of the word "terrorism" without additional qualifying language not only makes it impossible to

---

[15] Paul B. Davis, and Leonard B. Weinberg, *Introduction to Political Terrorism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 6.

[16] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Anti-Terrorism* (Joint Publication 3–07.2), (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), I-1.

[17] Criminal Penalties, 18 U.S.C., § 2332b.

[18] Management of Foreign Affairs, 22 U.S.C., § 2656f(d).

[19] Beverly Gage, "Terrorism and the American Experience: A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (2011): 18–19, 73–94.

strategize against those perpetrating the attacks based on intent, capability, and motivation, but it also lumps all who employ such tactics into a singular, frightening "other" with nebulous goals and objectives. "Counterterrorism" and "anti-terrorism" continue to be the predominant terms used by the federal government (although there are some nuances across agencies) to refer to actions taken to address VSJ. The result is a primary focus on a "hard power" approach to dealing with a poorly defined, generic "terrorist" threat, which is vulnerable to broad interpretations as to who is a terrorist, promulgating conflation with other groups using similar tactics, unrelated to VSJ.

While there has been some evolution in the federal government's understanding of VSJ, it is not clearly reflected in national strategies. The U.S. currently has multiple national strategies that frame the issues as countering a tactic (counterterrorism), which is of questionable value. To make it more challenging, each strategy is drafted to view the issue through a specific lens and does not clearly feed into a common vision of how to specifically impact VSJ as a movement. For example, strategies developed by the Department of Defense seek to solve problems by bringing to bear the resources of the U.S. military. In the foreword of the *National Military Strategy*, the chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff notes that the strategy "describes how we will employ our military forces to protect and advance our national interests."[20] Similarly, strategies developed by the State Department view solutions as foreign policy and diplomacy. The message from the secretary is "As President Obama has made clear, 'America's security depends on diplomacy and development.'"[21] An overarching strategy guiding a whole of government approach against the problem of VSJ would guide the use of all of the tools available: intelligence, defense, law enforcement, foreign policy, and economic power. Furthermore, common vision would guide multi-faceted efforts to undermine existing violent Salafi jihadi operations as well as future recruitment and support for VSJ goals.

The responsibility for U.S. strategy that addresses VSJ is shared among several government agencies. This distribution of responsibility has impeded development of a

[20] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015), i.

[21] U.S. Department of State, *United States Department of State Strategic Plan, 2014–2017* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2014), 2.

common lexicon or shorthand used when describing that threat; consequently, an understanding of why the VSJ message resonates so strongly among new recruits continues to elude U.S. efforts to counter it. In lieu of one overarching strategy focused on combating VSJ, the U.S. currently has multiple strategies produced by federal agencies that address counterterrorism threats to the U.S. based on the perspective of that particular agency. Those reviewed for this thesis include the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*,[22] the 2015 *National Military Strategy*,[23] the 2015 *National Security Strategy*,[24] the Department of Homeland Security *Strategic Plan FY2012–2016*,[25] the Department of State *Strategic Plan FY 2014–2017*,[26] and the 2011 *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*,[27] which constitutes the *National Countering Violent Extremism* (CVE) strategy. [28] Each of these strategies address a wide array of threats to the nation, but this thesis argues that they are too broad in scope to successfully guide a whole of government effort against VSJ and in fact do not mention Salafi jihadism at all. While the strategies are not at odds with each other and do undergo a coordination process which ensures the strategies do not actually contradict or conflict, there is no evidence of an interwoven strategy that ensures that together they address all issues related to a certain problem.

This thesis uses a post-structural textual analysis methodology to determine the actual use language referencing (violent) Salafi jihadism in current national counterterrorism strategies. The purpose is to identify how the adversary is currently described, determine the impact to political discourse, and to establish whether or not it sufficiently supports a unified approach, or ideally, a national strategy targeting the VSJ

[22] White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* (Washington, DC: White House, 2011).

[23] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States*.

[24] White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.

[25] U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan* (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security Office of Policy, 2012).

[26] U.S. Department of State, *United States Department of State Strategic Plan*.

[27] White House, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, 2011). For the purposes of this thesis, this document is referred to as the *CVE National Strategy*.

[28] Government Accountability Office, *Countering Violent Extremism: Additional Actions could Strengthen Training Efforts* (GAO-13-79) (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2012), 2.

movement. This researcher examined and quantified the language used in the strategies reviewed for this thesis referring to the terrorist threat. In addition to this, research to determine the need for precision of language provides support for the argument. This methodology "seeks to understand the ways in which these forms of representation take place, the assumptions behind them and the kinds of sense-making about the world that they reveal."[29] It concludes with an argument in support of a single national strategy to combat VSJ to protect and support U.S. national interests, targeting the movement itself and undermining its narrative and recruitment capabilities.

---

[29] Alan McKee, *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 17.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A.   TALKING ABOUT THE THREAT POSED BY VSJ

Despite significant tactical successes against AQ and Daesh, U.S. counterterrorism strategies have had little measurable impact on VSJ adherents' ability to recruit worldwide or on their interest in using violence to achieve their goals. According to Nadav Morag, "In fighting terrorism…the eradication of terrorist cells, the decapitation of the terrorist leadership, the blocking of terrorist funds, or the destruction of terrorist safe havens do not necessarily (and, in fact, rarely) result in the cessation of terrorist violence."[30] While the primary reliance on military and law enforcement tools may be one challenge to achieving success, distributed national strategies that do not focus on VSJ pose a significant hurdle to defeating this poorly understood adversary.

The lack of reference to the term Salafi jihadi across multiple national strategies is primarily due to the lack of a common understanding of what the ideology is and the inability to communicate clearly who adheres to it (and who does not). There is a need for a whole of government approach to assess how to best minimize or eradicate this threat. Coining and using the term "violent Salafi jihadism" or VSJ is a start; this emphasizes the violent nature of this movement to policymakers unfamiliar with Salafism in a broader context. Hard power strategies eliminating key adversaries and funding streams need to be bolstered by broader strategies that will impact the continued recruitment to and spread of this ideology.

There is an understandable reticence to use the name of a religious school of thought (Salafi) as part of this definition, as was cited by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2008.[31] DHS worked with American Muslims and produced a document that discussed the language used to describe the terrorist threat to the U.S. It

---

[30] Nadav Morag, "Measuring Success in Coping with Terrorism: The Israeli Case," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 4 (2005): 307.

[31] U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, *Terminology to Define the Terrorists: Recommendations from American Muslims* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008), 3.

cautioned against using terminology that might imply that the U.S. is in a war with Salafis, noting, "Salafism is a belief system that many people follow."[32] While this statement has merit, the lack of precise language has, by omission, implied that all Muslims are a threat; this is a self-defeating approach.

A review of the language used across six national strategies identified VSJ adversaries using a range of terms such as "al Qa'ida and its adherents," "ISIL," or just generic "terrorists." At best, this approach targets an organization, not the violent cult-like ideology[33] that goes beyond any identified group. The "cult" reference is discussed more in Chapter III. The 2015 *National Military Strategy* coined a new term, violent extremist organizations (VEO); the term is undefined in that document, but it states that VEOs include AQ and ISIL.[34] There is no reference made to Salafi jihadis by the national strategies put forth by the White House, the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, or the Department of State. This, despite the fact that the major incidents regularly cited in discussions about terror attacks, listed in the introduction, were all inspired by VSJ.

By using generic language such as "the terrorists" to imply reference to the threat from VSJ, U.S. strategists take their eyes off the ball, leaving the door open to conflation of the threat from VSJ with non-violent Islamists or locally focused insurgencies that pose no threat to the U.S. The challenge of how to frame this effort began with the declaration of the global war on terrorism (GWOT). There was considerable controversy over the use of this terminology to feed strategy against what was then understood to be AQ. General Richard B. Myers, Bush's Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted, "If you call it a war, then you think of people in uniform as being the solution." He suggested, "The threat instead should be defined as violent extremists, with the recognition that terror is the method they use."[35] This supports the argument that the word "terrorism" is

---

32 Ibid., 3.

33 For more on using "cult" to describe VSJ ideology, see DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, *Terminology to Define the Terrorist*.

34 Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy*, 1.

35 Steve Zeitlin, "Talking Points," *Voices* 34, no. 1 (spring 2008), 11.

not descriptive enough to guide a holistic strategy to counter VSJ and that conducting a traditional war against these adversaries may not be the solution in and of itself.

The use of the GWOT as a frame for the post 9/11 threat environment related to VSJ has confused the issue and diluted U.S. strategy considerably in the years following the 9/11 attacks. This lack of clarity carries over to the use of "counterterrorism" as a field of expertise. The complexity of VSJ as it relates to both geopolitics and Islam is daunting; framing the counterstrategy around a tactic does not address VSJ. The objective of the VSJ movement is not to struggle against an oppressive government or to advocate for the rights of the disenfranchised, unless those will serve larger goals. Simplifying this issue as being about "terrorism" removes the context of this particular ideology by dismissing the motivation or rationale behind terrorist attacks motivated by VSJ. The U.S. Department of State has designated 59 groups as "terrorists,"[36] all of whom became common adversaries of the U.S. and its allies in the GWOT. Despite the fact that the basis for the GWOT was the 9/11 attacks committed by the violent Salafi jihadist group AQ, this target list was broad enough to include insurgencies and locally focused groups like the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA), Shining Path in Peru, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) in Spain, and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in northern Iraq and Turkey. This broadened the growing field of counterterrorism to the point where it requires no knowledge of VSJ.

U.S. strategies are designed to address VSJ by organization, specifically, AQ, or more recently, Daesh. Rineheart agrees, explaining, "America has chosen a clearly enemy-centric approach to combating AQ in order to achieve its objectives, which, as President Obama has recently stated, is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al-Qaeda."[37] Since the September 11 attacks, the U.S. has gone to extreme lengths to protect itself from violent Salafi jihadi violence. It has gone to war in two Muslim countries, expanded domestic intelligence collection beyond constitutional limits,[38] and sent military and law

---

[36] For the current list, see http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm.

[37] Jason Rineheart, "Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, no. 5 (2010): 33.

[38] Charlie Savage, and Jonathan Weisman, "N.S.A Collection of Bulk Call Data is Ruled Illegal," *New York Times*, May 7, 2015, sec. Politics.

enforcement personnel into dozens of countries to conduct counterterrorism missions. All of these programs and actions are or were ostensibly intended to counter VSJ, and yet this movement is never mentioned. Raufer discusses how framing this enemy as an organization is problematic, arguing:

> Using a word creates a representation in the human mind. When you present as a fact that there actually exists an Al Qaeda organization, you create a common perception of a mechanical structure, like a motor car or clock. You press a button, and you honk the horn. You touch another button, and the windscreen wiper works. This mechanical model is the West's terrorism model: pyramidal, hierarchical. The 'strategic leadership' issues an order, then an attack occurs. Finally, the act is claimed on the organization's letterhead.[39]

This does not realistically portray the distributed and networked operations of VSJ inspired actions and recruitment, nor has this approach been strategically successful.

The lack of a clear, coherent, and focused national strategy specific to the VSJ movement has also had a negative impact on the standing of the U.S. with the 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide,[40] including the more than 2.6 million Muslims who live in the U.S.[41] When not referring to AQ or another organization as the adversary, political discourse commonly involves generic terms like "Islamic terrorism" (e.g., the 2007 *National Intelligence Estimate* referred to "Islamic terrorist groups and cells, especially al-Qaeda" as the main terrorist threat to the United States[42]), as well as "militant Islam" or "radical Islam" by self-proclaimed experts[43] that signify a weak understanding and communication of Islam generally and VSJ specifically. This lack of specificity in language combined with decades of representations in public discourse portraying Islam

---

[39] Xavier Raufer, "Al Qaeda: A Different Diagnosis," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 6 (2003): 394

[40] Bill Chappell, "World's Muslim Population Will Surpass Christians this Century, Pew Says," *National Public Radio*, April 2, 2015, http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/04/02/397042004/muslim-population-will-surpass-christians-this-century-pew-says.

[41] Andrew Stern, "Numbers of Muslims, Mormons Rising Sharply: Report," Reuters, May 1, 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/01/us-usa-religion-census-idUSBRE8401NK20120501.

[42] National Intelligence Council, *The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland* (Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council, 2007), 5.

[43] Steven Emerson, "Terrorism in America: The Threat of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism," in *The Future of Terrorism*, ed. Harvey W. Kushner, 33–54 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998). 33–54.

as inherently violent and Muslims as irrational undermines efforts to hone in on VSJ and disaggregate this movement from the Muslim population at large. [44] The resulting demonization of Islam by the media and some policymakers has not only contributed to the confusion, it undermines an effective, targeted strategy to combat this violent movement.

VSJ is a subset of Salafism, one that relies on a violent, puritanical interpretation of Sunni Islam and believes fervently in the Wahhabi tenet of takfir, translating its original meaning of excommunication to what amounts to sanctioned murder. [45] According to Pew Research, a vast majority of Muslims do not support VSJ or terrorist tactics,[46] but according to Dina al Raffie, it is in the best interest of VSJ ideologues to emphasize the commonalities of a master narrative[47] to overcome the wide divergence in beliefs. If all fundamentalist or radical Muslim groups are at risk of being dubbed "terrorist" by the U.S. government and determined to be an enemy of the state, despite the absence of any actual threat posed to U.S. and Western interests, the U.S. directly feeds into the VSJ narrative. Al Raffie describes this:

> The master narrative (of violent Salafism) has a strategic outlook in that it works to create both real and perceived hostilities between Muslims and non-Muslims…The primary purpose of the master narrative is to drive a wedge between Muslims and non-Muslims, through funneling messages and ideas through a religious filter.[48]

This supports the argument that use of the general terms "Islamic extremism" or "Islamic terrorism" when referring to VSJ is counterproductive.

It is difficult to lay all blame on policymakers for not having any depth of knowledge on the subject of VSJ. They cannot be experts on all topics, and they must

---

[44] For more on negative Western perceptions of Islam, see Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

[45] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad," *Middle East Policy* 8, no. 4 (2001): 27.

[46] "Muslim Publics Share Concerns about Extremist Groups," Pew Research Center, September 10, 2013, http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/09/10/muslim-publics-share-concerns-about-extremist-groups.

[47] Dina Al Raffie, "Whose Hearts and Minds? Narratives and Counter-Narratives of Salafi Jihadism," *Journal of Terrorism Research* 3, no. 2 (2012): 13–31.

[48] Ibid., 19.

rely on others to inform their own understanding. Expertise that the U.S. government relied on in the years after 9/11 has not served policymakers well. Self-proclaimed experts on "terrorism" emerged to fill the knowledge vacuum domestically in the national security and public safety sector. Retired law enforcement officers and agents, foreign security consultants, and neo-Orientalist scholars have become the cadre of advisors that feed the discourse.

According to Mueller and Stewart, the response to the 9/11 attacks was unlike anything seen following other crises.[49] Referencing their article, "The Terrorism Delusion,"[50] in which they describe what they consider to be an overreaction to the terrorist threat to the U.S., Crenshaw poses the question: "Why do governments not treat terrorism as the equivalent of any other disaster?"[51] Doing so would serve to undermine the key aspect of terrorism, which is to terrorize; building resiliency should be part of a unified strategy to discourage future attacks. In their article, Mueller and Stewart suggest that, in fact, AQ got lucky on September 11, and U.S. reaction to this successful attack may have empowered it beyond what it ever could have been otherwise. Crenshaw goes on to explicate:

> On the supply side, Mueller points to the 'terrorism industry' in government, the media, and among 'risk entrepreneurs.' Certainly the number of 'terrorism experts' has multiplied since September 11. In order to underscore the value of their advice, they are surely tempted to present their views as radically new and the threat as qualitatively different from past dangers. It is also fair to say that as newcomers to the field they may also lack the historical background to put the threat in perspective.[52]

Raufer added the implication that the U.S. was slower than European countries to develop any expertise related to VSJ; in an interview with PBS's *Frontline* discussing the term "Salafi," he stated:

---

[49] John Mueller, and Mark G. Stewart. "The Terrorism Delusion: America's Overwrought Response to September 11," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (2012): 81–110.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Martha Crenshaw, "A Welcome Antidote," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17 (spring–summer 2005): 518.

[52] Ibid.

I used it and wrote it many times, and the first response they had was when Ahmed Ressam [who planned to attack Los Angeles International airport] was arrested in 1999. I had a friend in Washington who called me and said, what is that word you were using, Salafist? They didn't know that such a thing existed.[53]

That there is room for improvement in U.S. strategies was illustrated by Seth Jones, who made the case as recently as 2012 that "several indicators suggest that al Qaeda is growing stronger" by referencing the growth of its network and the allegiance sworn to bin Laden's successor, Ayman Zawahiri, by several VSJ groups in Africa and Asia.[54] Jones's assessment was written prior to the more recent evolution of Daesh, which began as al Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), and supports his assessment. The former AQI has been successful in not only recruiting foreigners to fight in Iraq and Syria, but in stoking global fears that it is training these foreign recruits to send them home to the West to commit violent acts in its name. An unnamed law enforcement official was recently quoted calling Daesh's successes "not so much a recruitment effort as it is a global marketing campaign, beyond anything that al-Qaeda has ever done."[55]

What constitutes violent Salafi jihadism? Where did it come from, and why is the U.S. a target? What level of threat, or more significantly, risk, does it truly represent to the U.S. and its interests? Answering these questions is necessary to establishing a core understanding and developing an effective strategy against VSJ. Strategies have evolved from framing the problem as an effort to stop "terrorist attacks," as was depicted in the 2003 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*:

> The intent of our national strategy is to stop terrorist attacks against the United States, its citizens, its interests, and our friends and allies around the world and ultimately, to create an international environment inhospitable to terrorists and all those who support them.[56]

---

[53] Bruce Livesey, "The Salafist Movement," *PBS/Frontline*, January 25, 2005, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/special/sala.html.

[54] Seth G. Jones, "Think Again: Al Qaeda," *Foreign Policy*, no. 193 (May–June, 2012): 47.

[55] Kevin Johnson, "ISIL's Sophisticated Recruiting Campaign Poses Persistent Threat in U.S.," *USA Today*, April 26, 2015.

[56] White House, *The National Strategy for Combatting Terrorism* (Washington, DC: White House, 2002).

That strategy looked across terrorism worldwide as a problem to be addressed based on the premise that there was commonality and support across the landscape of groups committing terrorist attacks. While there may have been cooperation among terrorist groups in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., the Irish Republican Army was reportedly trained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and there were efforts to collaborate with the Italian Red Brigades and the German Red Army Faction),[57] the VSJ movement is different and needs to be approached differently. It bears no resemblance to nationalist movements like the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA), left wing narco-terrorist groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), or the apocalyptic Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo, aside from the use of terrorist tactics; yet, those groups are all mentioned in that 2003 strategy document.

The differences between VSJ and the motivations of the groups mentioned above are significant; the use of terrorist tactics is the only common thread. It is similar to framing all states with nuclear weapons as presenting a "nuclear threat" to the U.S. VSJ advocates violence in accordance with an interpretation of Salafism that adds its own idea of violent "jihad" to the level of the five pillars of Islam (to be discussed in a later chapter) and justifies the killing of apostates (fellow Muslims who do not believe as they do) and civilians as doing God's work.[58] This is very different from the nationalist or communist leanings of RIRA and FARC. VSJ is not a struggle for political representation in government or ethno-nationalism but, first and foremost, a violent, fundamental interpretation of Salafism seeking to dominate Sunni Islam.[59] Unlike the non-VSJ inspired terrorist groups mentioned in national strategies, VSJ adherents have made effective use of so-called "walk-ins" from dozens of countries, "sympathizers with little

---

[57] Jay Robert Nash, *Terrorism in the 20th Century: A Narrative Encyclopedia from the Anarchists through the Weathermen to the Unabomber* (New York: M. Evans and Co, 1998), 240.

[58] Assaf Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks," *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2008): 62.

[59] Liam Martin, and M. L. R. Smith, "Every Kingdom Divided against Itself Will be Ruined: A Reflection, a Deflection and a Qualified Reinterpretation of the New Global Jihad," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34, no. 9 (2011): 672.

to no paramilitary training who volunteer themselves for operations,"[60] as was noted by McAllister's reference of AQ. These individuals have become a valuable tool for the VSJ movement at large, particularly for Daesh. He goes on to note that the difference between nationalist and narco-terrorist groups and the VSJ movement is that the prime driver and motivation for VSJ is neither profit nor nationhood but ideology, which means the VSJ movement should be addressed differently. Citing Hoffman, McAllister asserts, "Although leadership interdiction is a valuable component in the war on terror it is not a viable method of counterterrorism."[61] Diaa Rashwan, a leading researcher on Islamic militants at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo agrees, saying, "Al-Qaeda is now an idea, or even a political program, that has spread around the world…The leadership is isolated, and we don't know if it can organize attacks, rather than inspire them."[62] This perspective argues for a more innovative approach to deal with VSJ than has been used in dealing with other groups using terrorism to achieve their political objectives.

Many other groups that use terrorist tactics focus on achieving their goals in their respective countries; even their activities outside of their operational areas are in support of their goals in that context. Conversely, as Marret noted in his analysis of al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM also known by GSPC[63]), the threat posed by the VSJ movement can be viewed as a hybrid of global and local, or "glocal," organizations.[64] He asserts that, while they are primarily focused locally, some have been internationalized based on their relationships with ethnic diasporas, particularly in Europe, and common interests with other VSJ groups. The U.S. invasion of Iraq served to bring common cause to many locally established groups. To prove this point, Marret explains,

---

[60] Brad McAllister, "Al Qaeda and the Innovative Firm: Demythologizing the Network," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (2004): 305.

[61] Ibid., 308.

[62] Mohamad Bazzi, "Al-Qaeda Becomes a Terror Franchise; Small Jihadist Cells may be Borrowing the Group's 'Brand,'" *Orlando Sentinel*, Aug 11, 2006.

[63] The acronym for its French name, *Groupe salafiste pour la pre dication et le combat.*

[64] Jean-Luc Marret, "Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A 'Glocal' Organization," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): 541.

> In June 2006, the U.S. military announced that approximately 20 percent of suicide bombers there are Algerian. Another 5 percent are Moroccan and Tunisian, and arrests in Algeria in the summer 2006 suggest that the GSPC may be helping to funnel some of these North Africans into Iraq.[65]

In this instance, VSJ motivated collaboration among culturally and ethnically diverse groups, in common cause against the US, its allies, and Iraqi Shia.

The attraction that AQ has to other VSJ inspired groups in various regions of Africa and Asia (AQ in Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, and Maghreb, and Boko Haram in Nigeria) can be better understood in this "glocal" context. American discourse often refers to these as AQ "franchises," referencing a network similar to corporate structures in the West, assuming there is a command center and common purpose. However, according to Strindberg and Wärn, these groups "are not products of the central core; they do not grow out of a unified body, but emerge from their own specific local contexts and needs."[66] While there is the stated desire among them to reinstate a VSJ caliphate, Nonneman notes, "the movement has failed to take notice of the fact that there simply is no universal Islamic culture."[67] This is an important factor for U.S. strategies to address and exploit.

The lack of a clear focus on the VSJ movement supported by specific expertise needed to address it has blurred the lines between who is a threat, who is not, and why. This can partly be attributed to a large body of academic discourse written from a Western perspective, called Orientalism, which represents an earnest but unsophisticated early effort (late nineteenth century) by Western academics to understand Arabs and Muslims. Orientalism eventually spawned a more conservative and biased academic body of work related to the peoples and the cultures that adhere to Islam, called neo-Orientalism. According to Strindberg and Wärn, neo-Orientalism as a school of thought emerged from "the Orientalist idea that Islam is a monolithic bloc stretching from

---

[65] Ibid., 545.

[66] Anders Strindberg, and Mats Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization and Resistance* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 104.

[67] Gerd Nonneman, "State of the Art, Rentiers, Monarchs and Democrats, State and Society: The Middle East between Globalization, Human "Agency" and Europe," *International Affairs* 77, no. 1 (2001): 141–162.

Morocco to Kuwait, and that its core concepts are fixed and immutable are key elements of the political discourse of what has been referred to as neo-Orientalism."[68] While Orientalism represents an immature but honest effort to understand the "Muslim world," neo-Orientalists have displayed a chauvinism that has influenced U.S. understanding of VSJ, portraying it as representative of Islam.

Instead of defining VSJ to the U.S. in the context of an ultra-conservative fundamentalist and violent interpretation of Sunni Islam, both Orientalist and the neo-Orientalist scholars who informed policymakers after 9/11 have tended to depict Islam as the problem. Edward Said lamented that this perspective had outsized influence on U.S. strategies:

> As with terrorism studies scholars, a great many identifiable orientalist Middle East scholars, including Bernard Lewis, Noah Feldman and the late Raphael Patai, have made frequent appearances as advisers and expert witnesses for official bodies, thereby transmitting many of the central assumptions and narratives of orientalist scholarship into the policy process.[69]

According to Alsam Syed, two of Lewis's neo-conservative protégés, Daniel Pipes and Martin Kramer, propagate a monolithic perspective of the Muslim world in political discourse that are biased and impeachable as to academic value. Syed criticized the fact that the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy (a think tank founded by Martin Indyk, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel and official for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or, AIPAC), solicited Pipes and Kramer:

> To 'educate' Americans on the 'failure of Middle Eastern studies' in the United States. It would be relevant to mention here that this institute had on its board and committee people like Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, and it is not difficult to imagine what sort of scholarship this study was assigned to discover.[70]

---

[68] Strindberg, and Wärn, *Islamism*, 11.

[69] Said, *Covering Islam*, 150.

[70] Aslam Syed, "Viewing Islam through Dark Clouds," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588 (July 2003): 200.

The mention of Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz is significant in that they are well known ardent supporters of Israel. While serving in various U.S. government positions, both have been the subject of U.S. counterintelligence concerns that have included documented efforts to aid Israel by providing it with U.S. classified information and technology.[71] Syed's implication is that neo-conservative policymakers with close relationships with Israel are politicizing the study of the Middle East at the expense of Muslims and Arabs, and are not particularly concerned with the academic rigor of their positions.

The influence of neo-Orientalism and the overall Western bias against Muslims has gone beyond national policy circles, undermining efforts to disaggregate the VSJ movement from Islam as a world religion. As recently as 2012, it was revealed that the New York Police Department had included a highly politicized film, reportedly received by an employee of the Department of Homeland Security, called *The Third Jihad*, warning of "radical Islam's vision of America" in counterterrorism training provided to police officers.[72] The film demonized Islam as an existential threat to the U.S. The film's website advertises the film this way:

> The Third Jihad is the groundbreaking film that reveals the truth. It exposes the destructive aims of Radical Islam and its mounting threat for America and the world. It covers all the major players—the radical extremists and the leaders trying to stop them. The Third Jihad will update you on the most urgent issue of our time in ways you can't find in the media.[73]

The film's narrator, a Muslim American physician who has testified before Congress on homegrown radicalization, says in the film, "Americans are being told that many of the mainstream Muslim groups are also moderate… When in fact if you look a little closer, you'll see a very different reality. One of their primary tactics is

---

[71] Stephen Green, "Serving Two Flags: Neocons, Israel and the Bush Administration," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 23, no. 4 (2004): 20–23.

[72] Michael Powell, "In Police Training, A Dark Film on Muslims," *New York Times*, January 23, 2012, sec. New York Region.

[73] "The Third Jihad," Clarion Project, accessed 5 September 2015, http://www.thethirdjihad.com/about.html.

deception."[74] Amid an uproar from Muslim civic groups, the film was removed from the curriculum.

In an angry response to the portrayals of Muslims in the backlash after 9/11, Mohammad Shahid Alam blames the lack of precision in language in the U.S. that has persisted for decades on neo-Orientalists, who use the terms "Islamists, Islamic fundamentalists, Islamic militants, Islamofascists, or Islamic terrorists…(meant to reference) all Islamicate movements—no matter what their positions on the political uses of violence,"[75] framing the use of broad terms as a means of war against any Islamic resistance. In an article questioning whether the U.S. did, in fact, understand the "enemy" (referring to AQ), Byman cautioned, "…we must be careful not to create more enemies than necessary. In particular, policy must seek to avoid turning groups with primarily local aspirations into ones that share al-Qaeda's global agenda."[76]

Academics, including Said, Strindberg, Wärn, and Jackson, have challenged Western misconceptions about political Islam, or Islamism, that erroneously characterize it as uniquely violent. Jackson analyzed more than 300 texts on the topic and concludes, "the discourse of 'Islamic terrorism' is profoundly unhelpful, not least because it is highly politicized, intellectually contestable, damaging to community relations and largely counter-productive in the struggle to control subaltern violence in the long run."[77]

U.S. policymakers' conflation of the threat from violent Salafi jihadi groups with a perceived threat from all Muslims has contributed to government reaction that has inadvertently supported VSJ narratives. Jonathan Schachter addresses this topic in his dissertation, "The Eye of the Believer: Psychological Influences on Counter-Terrorism Policy-Making," advising decision makers and analysts to ensure they better understand the contextual framework of the current conflict with Salafi jihadis to determine "the

---

[74] Powell, "In Police Training, A Dark Film on Muslims," sec. New York Region.

[75] Mohammad Shahid Alam, *Challenging the New Orientalism: Dissenting Essays on the War Against Islam* (North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 2006), 3.

[76] Daniel L. Byman, "Al-Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand our Enemy?" *World Politics* 56, no. 1 (2003): 161.

[77] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 24, no 3, 42 (2007): 395.

most effective courses of action."[78] Going back to the early 1990s, Richard Bulliet pointed out the same lack of nuance in understanding of the VSJ threat when he documented the reaction to the 1993 World Trade Center bombings observing,

> Preachers of hatred against Islam attempted to portray the Muslim faith as monolithic, unchanging, and viciously directed against Americans. What they did not choose to highlight was the enormous diversity among Muslim cultures or the focus within many Muslim groups on building community.[79]

The U.S. relies heavily on Israel for advice on terrorism related matters. This is exemplified by a 2004 Senate report (108-420) that established a federal program between the U.S. and Israel to "identify, develop, or modify existing or near term homeland security information, equipment, capabilities, technologies, and services to further the homeland security of the United States and to address the homeland security needs of federal, state, and local governments."[80] Close relations with Israel and the desire for expertise in dealing with terrorism on a broader scale than America could manage alone has influenced the understanding of how broadly Muslims support or adhere to VSJ. In fact, Israeli organizations, such as the American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) have funded "counterterrorism" training for U.S. members of Congress, law enforcement officers,[81] and other homeland security professionals for many years, thereby influencing how terrorism is perceived in the U.S. In 2011, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) received a complaint accusing AIEF of being a front for the Israeli backed lobbying group, the American Israel Public Affairs

---

[78] Jonathan M. Schachter, "The Eye of the Believer: Psychological Influences on Counter-Terrorism Policy-Makers" (dissertation, RAND Graduate School, 2002), 132.

[79] Richard W. Bulliet, "Rhetoric, Discourse, and the Future of Hope," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 588, no. 1 (2003): 10.

[80] S. Doc. No. 108–420 (2004), http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-108srpt420/html/CRPT-108srpt420.htm.

[81] Yaakov Lappin, "US Police Officials in Israel for Counter-Terrorism Program," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 31, 2011, sec. Diplomacy and Politics.

Committee (AIPAC). [82] As a result of this and other such programs, the Israeli government has been the major influence on U.S. policymakers' understanding of "counterterrorism," despite a strong anti-Muslim bias based on its own security environment.

While Israel has been dealing with groups using terrorist tactics for decades, and indeed, used such tactics in its struggle for independence from Great Britain in the last century, America's challenge in countering VSJ is a very different animal. The struggle between Israel and its neighbors is as much if not more geopolitical in nature than it is ideological, but Israeli influence on U.S. discourse results in framing it as a problem of "Islamic terrorism." This was in evidence after 9/11, when the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) focused on terrorism at its 2002 annual conference. Presentations emphasized the threat posed by Yasser Arafat, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, the Taliban, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria. In a report documenting the 2002 conference, Hearn wrote,

> Conference speakers thus looked near and far in their efforts to define those aligned with 'terrorists' against Israel …by drawing associations between Palestinian and Arab 'threats' and Bin Laden, they crafted a message of urgency tailored for the U.S. government and public: Stop suicide bombers and the states that support them, or they will target your streets and your children next.[83]

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently equated groups that threaten Israel with the VSJ movement embodied by AQ and Daesh that threaten the U.S., despite the clear divisions that exist in motivations, ideology, and objectives. In a speech to the United Nations, he argued, "HAMAS is like ISIS. HAMAS is like al Qaeda. HAMAS is like Hezbollah. HAMAS is like Boko Haram." [84] While it is impossible to directly link cause and effect, U.S. strategies continue to cast a wide net

---

[82] "AIPAC Congressional Lobbying Junkets to Israel Illegal Charges IRS and DOJ Filing," *PRNewswire*, September 9, 2011, http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/aipac-congressional-lobbying-junkets-to-israel-illegal-charges-irs-and-doj-filing---irmep-129535868.html.

[83] Dana Hearn, "AIPAC Policy Conference, 21–23 April 2002," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, no. 4 (2002): 68

[84] "Full text of Prime Minister Netanyahu's UN Speech," July 22, 2014, http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Full-text-of-Prime-Minister-Netanyahus-UN-speech-376626.

when addressing terror threats, as exemplified by the 2011 *National Counterterrorism Strategy*, which mentions both HAMAS and Hezbollah.[85] It is counterproductive to strategically address terrorism so broadly, and this has contributed to a generic approach to U.S. strategy and the use of imprecise language.

The considerable gap between the politicized rhetoric surrounding "radical Islam" and a realistic assessment of actual threat to the U.S. from VSJ diminishes the U.S. government's capacity to develop strategies to effectively counter that threat and assign resources accordingly. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official Paul Pillar observed:

> Overheated rhetoric that has spun out ever more frightening and unusual ways in which terrorists might inflict large numbers of casualties has also elevated the emotional content of discussions of terrorism and as such has not promoted balanced and temperate consideration of what to do about it.[86]

Crenshaw references Israeli analyst Hanan Alon when noting, "In the case of terrorism, threat exaggeration also plays into the hands of the terrorists, as Alon pointed out in in 1980. A purpose of terrorism is to convey an inflated sense of the power of the terrorist."[87] The need to understand and assess the threat from VSJ in a rational objective manner is essential to managing resources, developing a plan, and measuring progress.

U.S. political discourse tends to portray the threat as more pervasive than it is, framing the VSJ movement as a formidable opponent to the U.S. Audrey Kurth Cronin analyzes this, describing,

> Even as Al-Qaeda's top leadership hunkered down in the Hindu Kush mountains and watched their subordinates being killed off through stepped-up drone attacks, new affiliates began naming themselves 'Al-Qaeda' and expanding their reach, perpetuating the image of a seamless global threat…The western allies inadvertently reinforced it by swallowing the narrative of an endlessly adaptive, coherent movement with tentacles reaching throughout the world.[88]

---

[85] White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, 4, 18.

[86] Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001), 5.

[87] Crenshaw, "A Welcome Antidote," 518.

[88] Audrey Kurth Cronin, "The Evolution of Counter-Terrorism: Will Tactics Trump Strategy?" *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 86, no. 4 (July, 2010): 837.

Attributing such power and influence to VSJ perpetuates a fiction that it has a true foothold among the Muslim population, which in fact, is not the case. Muslim victims of violent Salafi jihadi violence in Africa and Asia far outnumber non-Muslim victims outside of that region.[89] In her discussion about measuring the success of the GWOT, Rashmi Singh agreed, maintaining:

> The metrics (of the Global War on Terrorism) first constructed AQ as the key threat…to the very foundations of the post-Cold War world. Hence, AQ was framed as a vital challenge to 'civilisation' as a whole...This was truly astonishing given that AQ was a non-state organisation with a fraction of the United States' material and ideological resources at its disposal.[90]

Bin Laden confirmed this in a 2004 video, noting that it is:

> Easy for us to provoke and bait... All that we have to do is to send two mujahidin ... to raise a piece of cloth on which is written al-Qaeda in order to make the generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic, and political losses.[91]

Elevating AQ, an instrument of the larger VSJ movement, to the status of a well-funded nation state is a result of talking around a non-specific, poorly defined adversary that is terrifying in its brutality and willingness to murder civilians. Fear has influenced much of the previous strategies; the time has come to formulate an effective, cohesive, and practical way forward against this adversary.

Additional casualties of the imprecise language used to reference VSJ are Muslim Americans, and this may contribute to why the U.S. government uses the term "violent extremism" as opposed to something more precise, such as "VSJ." However, despite the good intentions, it has only served to muddle the issue, and, in a vacuum of definition, it implies that all Muslims are suspect. Statements made concerning the proposed construction of an Islamic cultural center in the neighborhood of the 9/11 memorial in

---

[89] Assaf Moghadam, "The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 3 (2008): 14–16.

[90] Rashmi Singh, "Measuring 'Al-Qaeda:' The Metrics of Terror," in *Knowing Al-Qaeda: The Epistemology of Terrorism*, ed. Christina Hellmich, and Andreas Behnke (London: Ashgate, 2012): 20. 1–28.

[91] "Full Transcript of bin Laden's Speech," *Al Jazeera*, November 1, 2004, accessed July 31, 2015, www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/11/200849163336457223.html.

Manhattan brought the fear and anger directed towards American Muslims into the public view.[92] The terror attacks achieved more than bin Laden could have ever hoped by inspiring such emotional responses against an entire religion, which would not be tolerated against any other minority group in the U.S. Bhatia expounds on this, saying:

> The declaration of a "war on terror" on an act rather than one specific group left the enterprise tantalisingly open to any number of interpretations or appropriations, with the terminology used by the Bush administration so polarising that contradictory information was discarded as irrelevant.[93]

He goes on to compare the political discourse during the Bush administration to Balfour's definition of propaganda, which seeks "to avoid or limit such [critical] discussion and secure instead the acceptance of certain interpretations without exposing them to it, to cajole rather than to convince,"[94] which Bhatia notes is particularly effective in an emotional environment, such as that created by terrorism.

A consistent theme of this thesis is that VSJ presents challenges to the U.S. government that it has not yet managed to overcome. Understanding the movement itself is one thing; building and executing a strategy that will negatively impact the VSJ movement's ability to grow and continue to threaten the U.S. and its interests is quite another. Moghadam asserts, "waging a battle against a religious ideology such as the Salafi-jihad is a challenging task that requires commitment and ingenuity."[95]

Commitment and ingenuity are not currently reflected in U.S. national strategies, most of which have been developed not to solve any particular problem, but to lay out the overall mission objectives of each agency. According to Glueck, in a management context, strategy is a "unified, comprehensive, and integrated plan…designed to ensure

---

[92] Brian J. Bowe, "The Heartbreak of the Place: Space, Religion and Politics in Post-9/11 Mosque Controversies," *The Muslim World* 103, no. 1 (01, 2013): 181–194.

[93] Michael V. Bhatia, "Fighting Words: Naming Terrorists, Bandits, Rebels and Other Violent Actors," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 16.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Moghadam, "The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology," 16.

that the basic objectives of the enterprise are achieved."[96] The benefits of a *unified* national strategy with the clear objective to diminish or eliminate the threat from VSJ inspired groups, from which more agency-specific implementation plans can evolve, does not currently exist. VSJ has triggered one of the most expensive and resource intensive efforts ever executed by the United States government and therefore would seem to justify a focused, whole of government approach demanding a unity of effort such as that seen during World War II.

B.   U.S. NATIONAL STRATEGIES: A REVIEW

A unified national strategy would provide a common foundation on which to strategize and emphasize the need for a holistic approach. The strategies reviewed in this thesis refer to the threat differently, and none focus clearly on VSJ. None of them mention Salafi jihadism; the language ranges from "AQ and adherents and affiliates"[97] to "violent extremist organizations"[98] to the generic "terrorist" referencing activities, organizations, networks, and activities.[99]

Each of the following plans was reviewed looking for specific language about the threat posed to the U.S. by the VSJ movement:

- 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*
- 2015 *National Military Strategy*
- 2015 *National Security Strategy*
- *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan FY2012–2016*
- *Department of State Strategic Plan FY 2014–2017*
- 2011 *Countering Violent Extremism Strategy* (formally titled *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*)

---

[96] William F. Glueck, *Business Policy and Strategic Management*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 9.

[97] Mentioned 42 times in the 2011 White House, *National Counterterrorism Strategy*.

[98] Coined in the 2015 *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, noting inclusion of both AQ and Daesh.

[99] This was the predominant term of reference used in the strategy documents reviewed here.

These strategies outline a vision across major areas such as, "national security," "homeland security," "national intelligence," "violent extremism" or "counterterrorism." They address broad domains across the government, and discuss in general terms how the government will address problems in that mission space. While it does not necessarily make sense from an outside perspective, for example, to have a national security strategy separate from a homeland security strategy, it does make sense based on accountability; the agency with the lead on executing the mission has the responsibility for constructing the strategy. [100] The White House has overall responsibility for strategy over the executive branch agencies. Subordinate to the White House, Department of State is responsible for foreign policy; Department of Defense is responsible for military policy; and Department of Homeland Security is responsible for border policy (land, air, sea, cargo, and passengers) as well as a plethora of related missions including executive protection, cybersecurity, infrastructure protection, and immigration.

This distributed approach to producing problem solving strategies has a weakness, known as Maslow's hammer: if all one has is a hammer, then everything looks like a nail.[101] Each agency, understandably, views a given issue through its own lens. Without an overarching definition of the problem (this is what it is, and this how we deal with it), it almost forces each of the mission based strategies to remain as general as possible within a given agency's own mission space, so as not to conflict with the others, yet broad enough to address what may be a problem tomorrow. Porter and Mykleby put it this way: "…we have binned government departments, agencies, laws, authorities, and programs into lanes that lack the strategic flexibility and dynamism to effectively adapt to the global environment."[102] This is a challenge based on how the U.S. government operates at a strategic level, and it merits additional study.

The internationally acknowledged term "Salafi jihadism" is not mentioned in any of the documents reviewed, despite the implied or explicit emphasis in most on AQ or

---

[100] The exception to this is the CVE strategy, which has no designated lead.

[101] Abraham H. Maslow, *The Psychology of Science* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 15.

[102] Wayne Porter, and Mark Mykleby. *A National Strategic Narrative* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2011), 10.

Daesh, both motivated by VSJ. A unified national strategy would serve to not only frame the issue but to set out a common way to understand it. Clearly stated and in terms of practical efforts over the past 10 years, the U.S. national priority with regard to terrorist threats overseas and in the U.S. is VSJ. If resources are to be committed for "counterterrorism" efforts, they should be first and foremost committed to combat VSJ. If the VSJ threat is primarily from overseas, those resources need to address the current threat posed by individuals, logistics, and operations, in addition to factors that could influence future threats, including the spread of this ideology. The inconsistent use of generic terms implies that the adversary includes any violent extremist organization, operating anywhere, against anyone, for any reason. This is overbroad, unrealistic, and wrong. While it would be a high-minded goal to devote resources to combatting terrorist tactics wherever they are used, the U.S. has limited resources, and must be practical about what can, and should, be a priority. As was mentioned earlier in this thesis, it is doubtful that anyone takes the VEO reference to mean that the U.S. is actively targeting the RIRA, ETA, or violent hate groups on U.S. soil; most people understand the generic terminology as code for "Islamic extremist organizations," which is not helpful in understanding VSJ.

In arguing that more specific language is needed regarding U.S. national strategy and addressing the VSJ threat, it is necessary to clearly acknowledge efforts across the federal government since 9/11 to avoid defining this problem as Islamic. The response has been to define the problem as radical or extremist organizations, ensuring the language is generic enough not to offend. The weakness of defining the problem as an organization is exemplified by strategies prior to 2012 (such as the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*)[103] that do not refer to Daesh: Daesh was not foreseen in 2011, and the next violent Salafi jihadi group to emerge may also be unpredictable. If VSJ as a violent ideological movement is the focus, then the specific organizations should become less central to the strategy (although fair game for tactical operations that support the overall strategy). The problem with generic language is that it assumes that there is a common understanding of the problem; research indicates that this is not the case. This holds true for each of the national strategies reviewed for this thesis.

---

[103] White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism.*

1. National Strategy for Counterterrorism, 2011

The *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* is solely focused on terrorism, but is at a disadvantage in that it is already four years old and the crisis in Syria that has given rise to Daesh had not yet materialized. Its approach to defining the threat is organization-centric, focusing on "al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents."[104] Unless one considers Daesh an ally of AQ, as opposed to being a VSJ inspired group competing with AQ for notoriety and resources, this is insufficient to define the threat. This strategy uses the term "al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents" to represent the threat posed by VSJ adherents 38 times. This AQ lexicon did not completely replace the more generic and unqualified uses of the terms "terrorism" (10 times), "terrorists" (34 times), "terrorist organizations" (10 times), and "terror attacks" (10 times) throughout the document. Furthermore, it never referenced the underlying VSJ ideology. As was discussed earlier in this thesis, use of the word "terrorism" and its variants without additional qualifiers is left to subjective interpretation.

2. 2015 National Military Strategy

The *National Military Strategy* (NMS) is broadly focused on the entire Department of Defense mission. Thus, while counterterrorism is a component, it is not the sole focus of the strategy. The predominant terminology referencing the VSJ threat in this strategy is "violent extremist organizations," or VEOs, as "led by al Qaida and the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)."[105] Again, this speaks to an organization or enemy-centric approach, as opposed to focusing on the VSJ that motivates the individuals and the overall movement. In keeping with the hammer and nail analogy, Bhatia notes, "Enemification serves the purpose of determining a target for missiles to aim at...(and) engineers conditions within which people see it as necessary to

---

104 The document defines "affiliates" as **"**Groups that have aligned with al-Qa'ida, and adherents and affiliates: as "Individuals who have formed collaborative relationships with, act on behalf of, or are otherwise inspired to take action in furtherance of the goals of al-Qa'ida—the organization and the ideol-ogy—including by engaging in violence regardless of whether such violence is targeted at the United States, its citizens, or its interests." White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism.*

105 Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy*, 3.

carry out military action."[106] The 2015 NMS references VEOs (with the implication that this means AQ and Daesh) 17 times; it refers generically to "terrorism" eight times.

3. 2015 National Security Strategy

Like the NMS, the *National Security Strategy* (NSS) is a broad strategy, but it does include terrorism in its scope. Published by the White House, it acknowledges the need to work against this threat in a more holistic manner but without referencing any specific movement or ideology. Instead, referencing "violent extremism" it states:

> We must recognize that a smart national security strategy does not rely solely on military power. Indeed, in the long-term, our efforts to work with other countries to counter the ideology and root causes of violent extremism will be more important than our capacity to remove terrorists from the battlefield.[107]

This strategy uses the unqualified terminology of "terrorism" 29 times, and variants of "violent extremism" nine times. There is no mention of Salafi jihadism in the document.

4. Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan FY2012–2016

The Department of Homeland Security unveiled its strategic plan just prior to the conflict in Syria so also did not have the advantage of seeing the emergence of the AQI follow on group, Daesh, being resurrected in Syria and Iraq. The DHS strategy is at a much higher level than the others reviewed here, covering most of its extremely broad mission space. Due to the very high level of this strategy, the language is probably the least precise of all those reviewed. However, it does set its first strategic goal as "Preventing Terrorist Attacks" with subordinate objectives:

- *Understanding the threat:* Collect, gather, analyze, and appropriately share intelligence and other information on current and emerging threats.

- *Deter and disrupt operations:* Deter, detect, and disrupt surveillance, rehearsals, and execution of operations by terrorists and other malicious actors.

---

[106] Aditi Bhatia, "Discursive Illusions in the American National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," *Journal of Language and Politics* 7, no. 2 (2008): 220.

[107] White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, ii.

- *Protect against terrorist capabilities:* Protect potential targets against the capabilities of terrorists, malicious actors, and their support networks to plan and conduct operations.
- *Stop the spread of violent extremism:* Prevent and deter domestic violent extremism and the radicalization process that contributes to it.
- Increase community participation in efforts to deter terrorists and other malicious actors and mitigate radicalization toward violence.[108]

The strategy does not reference Salafi jihadism or anything related to a specific ideology, keeping with the generic use of the word "terrorism" and its variants (35 times) and "violent extremism" (twice).

5. Department of State Strategic Plan FY 2014–2017

Similar to the DHS strategic plan, the Department of State (DOS) plan is a few years old and covers the entire mission space of foreign policy. DOS is the agency that probably pays the most attention to precision of language due to its sensitive role in diplomacy. For this reason, it may be assumed that DOS would be the least likely to call out a religious ideology in its strategy. References to the word "terrorism" and its variants are only used 5 times in this document, with "violent extremism" and "violent extremist" used eight times. It states that part of the DOS strategy is to "counter violent extremism," (presumably overseas) and that "the United States will focus on the drivers of violent extremism."[109] This document is more positive in tone than the other strategies, stressing U.S. actions to influence rather than control, possibly an acknowledgment of *A National Strategic Narrative*,[110] written by Porter and Mykleby. However, it does not define or reference the threat as Salafi jihadism.

6. 2011 Countering Violent Extremism Strategy

The *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* document, referred to as the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategy,[111]

---

[108] U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan*, 3–4.

[109] U.S. Department of State, *United States Department of State Strategic Plan*, 22.

[110] Porter, and Mykleby. *A National Strategic Narrative*.

[111] Government Accountability Office, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 2.

differs from the other strategies in several aspects. One, it is focused on the influence of VSJ on U.S. citizens and residents, with the expressed purpose of preventing terrorist attacks in the U.S. While extremely important to public safety and homeland security, this problem is actually peripheral to the issue of addressing and defining VSJ in order to mitigate or defeat it. If the federal government designs an effective national strategy that impacts hardcore VSJ adherents where they live (predominantly in Asia and Africa, but also in Europe), the VSJ influence on vulnerable recruits in the U.S. should decrease. There is more research needed to determine if, in fact, the threat from VSJ would survive in the U.S. without that outside influence; the majority of Americans inspired by VSJ seem to be recruited or influenced by those who adhere to this violent ideology overseas. This was asserted in the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, which states, "In the global information environment, al-Qa'ida adherents who promote or attempt to commit violence domestically are influenced by al-Qa'ida ideology and messaging that originates overseas."[112] This supports the need for a unified national strategy to combat VSJ where it exists as a movement, as success there will impact influence and recruitment in the U.S.

The CVE strategy began as an effort to prevent VSJ from inspiring attacks in the U.S. CVE is a domestic program that has the mission of preventing "violent extremism," detecting, deterring, and preventing attacks by "individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals."[113] Both the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice (DOJ), in collaboration with state, local, and tribal government agencies, are responsible for implementing the national strategy[114] with the goal of "improving our understanding of the means and mechanisms of violent extremism within the United States and its implications for our country."[115]

---

[112] White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, 17.

[113] "Countering Violent Extremism," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, accessed October 10, 2015. http://www.dhs.gov/topic/countering-violent-extremism.

[114] White House, *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, 2011).

[115] "Countering Violent Extremism: Understanding Violent Extremism," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, accessed October 10, 2015, http://www.dhs.gov/countering-violent-extremism-understanding-violent-extremsim.

The fact that there is no designated lead for this effort is problematic. The focus of the DHS CVE strategy is "homegrown violent extremists" or "HVE," defined by DHS as:

> A person of any citizenship who has lived or operated primarily in the United States or its territories who advocates, is engaged in, or is preparing to engage in ideologically-motivated terrorist activities (including providing material support to terrorism) in furtherance of political or social objectives promoted by a terrorist organization, but who is acting independently of direction by a terrorist organization.[116]

The focus of CVE is currently on federal government efforts to support local officials and community leaders "to prevent violent extremists and their supporters from inspiring, radicalizing, financing, or recruiting individuals or groups in the United States to commit acts of violence."[117]

The governing CVE strategy document *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* was published by the White House.[118] Assigning two large agencies (DHS and the Department of Justice) "in collaboration with" the oft referenced "state, local, and tribal government agencies" as leads for this initiative presents challenges: if no one agency is accountable, it will be difficult to measure success or failure. The CVE national strategy implementation plan assigns both DHS and DOJ responsibility for supporting national CVE-related training efforts and emphasizes the importance of collaboration among federal, state, local, and tribal government agencies in order to achieve the goals of the strategy.[119] In order for DHS and DOJ components to determine the extent to which they are fulfilling departmental CVE-related responsibilities, they must be able to identify which of the trainings they conduct is CVE-related, which requires that they understand what constitutes CVE-related training.

The CVE initiative addresses the issue of Americans or U.S. residents who planned, attempted, or perpetrated violent acts in the U.S. after having been inspired by

---

116 Ibid.

117 White House, *CVE National Strategy*, 3.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

VSJ. Precision of language has been an issue in that, while understanding that this violence is inspired by a fringe group of violent Sunni Muslims, there have been concerns about how to discuss CVE without painting all Muslims with a broad brush. There is a push and pull between those who see the value in using more specific language to define the problem, and those who resist because the proposed language is not specific enough to be helpful. On the DHS CVE website, one must access documents linked to the site to see the more specific references to "al Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents;"[120] however, the language used dilutes the focus of CVE efforts. For instance, the website reads:

> The threat posed by violent extremism…is neither constrained by international borders nor limited to any single ideology. Groups and individuals inspired by a range of religious, political, or other ideological beliefs have promoted and used violence against the Homeland.[121]

While admirable in its purpose to prevent adoption of violent ideologies regardless of the origin, it is problematic to imbue one program with the responsibility for violent neo-Nazi, white supremacist, left-wing and right-wing political and religious extremists as if they can be addressed the same way with the same tools.

It is worth noting that House Resolution (H.R.) 2899[122] proposed (as of July 15, 2015) amending the Homeland Security Act of 2002 by adding an Office for Countering Violent Extremism in DHS, which would serve as the domestic counterpart to the DOS office dealing with CVE outside the U.S. Again, Salafi jihadism is not mentioned in the act but is only implied by references to "violent extremism."

C.   LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY

It is clear that the authors of these strategies have struggled with defining the terrorist threat facing the U.S. in the decades after the 9/11 attacks, with many of the

---

[120] U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Countering Violent Extremism Training* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, 2011), http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cve-training-guidance.pdf.

[121] "DHS's Approach to Countering Violent Extremism," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, accessed October 10, 2015, http://www.dhs.gov/dhss-approach-countering-violent-extremism.

[122] "H.R.2899: CVE Act," 2015, https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2899/text.

issues contributing to this struggle noted in this chapter. However, the use of imprecise language continues to fail those responsible for executing this important mission in a coordinated and focused way.

In addition to the impediment of clearly referencing VSJ, there are overarching premises on which the U.S. could base a unified national strategy to turn back the tide on this movement. However, there is an immediate need to challenge common rhetoric and assumptions in order to have that conversation. For example, a good strategy would include an assessment of all government policies to ensure unintended consequences do not undermine a unified VSJ strategy. The U.S. has historically implemented a foreign policy, which in the context of combatting VSJ, has been counterproductive. Mearscheimer and Walt illustrated U.S. policy impact as a catalyst for VSJ inspired violence by noting Steve Coll's account of Ramzi Yousef's reasoning behind the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993. According to Coll, Yousef was driven by the desire to "stop the killing of Arabs by Israeli troops," believing that attacking the U.S. was the "only way to cause change."[123] Yousef went on to say, "he truly believed his actions had been rational and logical in pursuit of a change in U.S. policy toward Israel."[124] According to Coll, Yousef "mentioned no other motivation during the flight and no other issue in U.S. foreign policy that concerned him."[125] U.S. foreign policy cannot be dictated by how it will impact the VSJ movement alone, but it would inform strategies to at least understand unintended consequences, particularly regarding the VSJ master narrative.

There are significant cultural and political barriers to countering the violent Salafi jihadi movement, but understanding the reality of what VSJ is and how various groups subscribing to VSJ have survived despite U.S. efforts to eliminate them will provide a foundation to take U.S. strategy to another level. A common comprehension of what can

---

[123] John J. Mearsheimer, and Stephen M. Walt *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), Kindle edition, 66.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid., 65–66.

be done, such as disaggregating VSJ from other less significant threats and assigning proportional resources to defeat it, will move this effort forward.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

III. WORDS MATTER: EXAMINING "TERRORISM" AS THE FRAME TO UNDERSTAND THE VIOLENT SALAFI JIHADIST THREAT

A. "TERRORISM" IS INSUFFICIENT TO DESCRIBE THE VSJ THREAT

It is worth considering the unqualified use of the word "terrorism" as a standalone reference, at least in the development of national policy or strategy under the premise that words matter and that in order to advance our democracy, strategists must force more detail and consistency into the conversation. The tendency to view the threat from VSJ in the framework of a "war against terror" may make it easier for traditional military and political strategists to process, but it does not support a clear understanding of how to counter this threat. After the September 11 attacks, U.S. government officials tended to use the hermeneutic of previous wars to understand this new threat environment. In the 9/11 Commission report, Condileeza Rice made just such a parallel:

> Despite the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915 and continued German harassment of American shipping, the United States did not enter the First World War until two years later. Despite Nazi Germany's repeated violations of the Versailles Treaty and provocations throughout the mid-1930s, the Western democracies did not take action until 1939. The U.S. government did not act against the growing threat from Imperial Japan until the threat became all too evident at Pearl Harbor. And, tragically, for all the language of war spoken before September 11th, this country simply was not on a war footing.[126]

The fact that this statement was made three years after the attack by one of the president's closest advisors is illustrative of the need to frame this new threat in a way that it can be understood—calling it a war made it easier to generate public support for the focus on military action as a "strategy." This approach has been consistently taken by U.S. government officials and has contributed to the primary reliance on hard power. Friedman, Harper, and Preble assert, "The al Qaeda movement can still do serious

---

[126] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, "National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States: Transcript of Rice's 9/11 Commission Statement," April 8, 2004, http://www.9-11commission.gov/archive/hearing9/9-11Commission_Hearing_2004-04-08.htm.

damage, but treating it as a new, monolithic threat like the Communist menace is profoundly counterproductive and makes it seem stronger and more united than it is."[127]

There are significant issues surrounding the use of the word "terrorism" as a standalone reference. One is that it is predominantly used in the U.S. to describe violent acts perpetrated by Muslims. Another is that the word itself does not differentiate between tactics used by citizens against an oppressive government and acts committed by narcotics traffickers used to cow a government and its population.

Following the dramatic terrorist acts committed by Palestinian and other insurgency groups in the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s, more attention was paid in government, academia, and media circles to Islamic groups struggling against their own governments or against those perceived as occupying Muslim lands. Yousef explains, "In the 1980s, active political Islam became synonymous with extremism and terrorism as seen by Western educators, decision makers, and media. It is also associated with hostage crises, suicidal explosions, and the killing of foreign tourists."[128] This led some over the past few decades to reflexively equate Islam with terrorism, and this calcified after 9/11. However, this is an extreme generalization, and it is not helpful when strategizing against a movement that has put the U.S. and other Western interests firmly in its crosshairs. It ignores the differences in goals, grievances, ideology, and adversary. This has resulted in an unproductive conflation of the threat posed by VSJ adherents with other groups that have resorted to terrorist tactics. According to Jackson:

> The application of labels such as "terrorist," "fundamentalist" and "extremist" to groups like Hamas and Hizbollah for example, functions to obscure their simultaneous existence as political party, social welfare provider, protection force, local association, relief agency, charity, education provider, bank, guerrilla force and the like—as well as position them as the enemy of Western societies.[129]

---

[127] Benjamin Friedman, Jim Harper, and Christopher A. Preble, *Terrorizing Ourselves: Why U.S. Counterterrorism Policy is Failing and How to Fix It* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2010), 19.

[128] Ayman Talal Yousef, "Stereotyping Islam in Western Perceptions between Fundamentalism and Phobia: Analytical and Critical Reading," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* 1 no. 1 (2013): 17.

[129] Jackson, "Constructing Enemies," 401–402.

The label "terrorist," while technically accurate, also dismisses the objectives of both HAMAS and Hezbollah, which are rooted in power struggles related to geography that is now under the control of the Israeli government and the expansion of controversial Israeli settlements. Terrorist tactics employed by these groups, while brutal and deadly, are not driven by the same ideology that drives the VSJ movement, do not target the U.S. homeland, and therefore should not factor in to a strategy to combat violent Salafi jihadists.

Terrorism as a tactic has traditionally been used by the weak against the strong, by individuals or groups against their real or perceived oppressors. The word itself is defined in law to suit the needs of a particular government, not all of them fair and benevolent protectors of the people whom they govern. By definition, what is just and allowable as far as tactics to influence behavior of those in power is judged by those in power. This rigs the playing field. Marsell and Moghaddam assert, "Efforts to alter political, economic, or social conditions by sub-national groups are not crimes in themselves, but the efforts must be conducted within the constraints of law and morality as codified in local, national, and international systems."[130] However, this begs the question that, if governments create the laws that define what is terrorism and who is a terrorist and choose to maintain unfavorable conditions for a population, must the oppressed accept and surrender because that is the law? Former President Richard Nixon did not think so:

> There is an international disease which feeds on the notion that if you have a cause to defend, you can use any means to further your cause, since the end justifies the means. As an international community, we must oppose this notion, whether it be in Canada, in the United States, or anywhere else. No cause justifies violence as long *as the system provides for change by peaceful means* [emphasis added].[131]

---

[130] Anthony J. Marsella, and Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Origins and Nature of Terrorism: Foundations and Issues," *The Trauma of Terrorism: Sharing Knowledge and Shared Care, an International Handbook* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Maltreatment & Trauma Press, 2004), 19.

[131] "Speech on the October Crisis" (October 1970), quoted in Louis Fournier, *F.L.Q: The Anatomy of an Underground Movement* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1984), 256.

The implication is that, as long as there are peaceful means to further a political cause, violence is not justified; however, if there is no political process by which to address grievances, it is not so simple.

The understanding and portrayal of the VSJ threat in U.S. strategies has progressed over the years, evolving from the "global war on terror" (GWOT) to the threat posed by "al-Qa'ida, its adherents and affiliates."[132] However, if the U.S. is determined to diminish the threat posed by VSJ, it needs a unified strategy to focus on the movement more specifically. Reference to this threat under the umbrella of "counterterrorism" alone minimizes and dilutes what VSJ represents. Despite the fact that the threat is rarely framed as a GWOT in the current political discourse, Record's assertion that we shift from a strictly counterterrorism focus is still relevant:

> Sound strategy mandates threat discrimination and reasonable harmonization of ends and means. The GWOT falls short on both counts. Indeed, it may be misleading to cast the GWOT as a war…to the extent that the GWOT is directed at the phenomenon of terrorism, as opposed to flesh-and-blood terrorist organizations, it sets itself up for strategic failure. Terrorism is a recourse of the politically desperate and militarily helpless, and, as such, it is hardly going to disappear.[133]

This position represents the evolution from the U.S. targeting a tactic (terrorism)—regardless of motivation or location—to the current approach, which is more organization-centric (AQ). The next step is to clearly define the movement that is not specific to one organization or group but is united in calls to attack the U.S. based on VSJ.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, national strategies have struggled to address the threat posed to the U.S. by VSJ, with many competing agendas painting a different picture of the problem and how to deal with it. This has made an extremely complicated geo-political environment even more difficult to manage, understand, and impact. The GWOT was the initial context in which the federal government framed the threat, which

---

[132] White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*.

[133] Jeffrey Record, "Bounding the Global War on Terrorism," *Military Technology* 28, no. 6 (2004): 17.

made everyone's terrorists "our terrorists" in exchange for support for U.S. military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Inclusion of disparate groups that employ terror tactics in U.S. political discourse and strategies when discussing the "terrorist" threat undermines a clear understanding and focus on VSJ in favor of a broader "counterterrorism" approach. This is particularly counterproductive for those who have public safety and security missions that do not require an in-depth understanding of geopolitics, intra-denominational differences, and history of Islam in Europe, Asia, and Africa; they depend on national strategies to make clear whom the U.S. is targeting and why.

Conflating the threat from all Islamic groups that have used or threatened to use terrorist tactics with VSJ inspired groups has diverted attention and focus on U.S. adversaries, and also implies that VSJ has more adherents in Muslim dominated countries than is the case. It is well documented that many groups labeled "terrorist" abhor VSJ beliefs and actions, and consider them at odds with their own struggles, including many Salafis themselves. Bleich supports this, citing Frank Buijs' observations that Salafis described as purist and politicos[134] "may actually serve as a barrier to terrorist actions rather than as the commonly supposed stepping-stone."[135]

Both the Muslim Brotherhood and HAMAS have condemned VSJ groups such as AQ and Daesh. Lebanese Hezbollah, one of the groups called out in the White House national CT strategy in 2011, is at odds with the VSJ influenced groups, as are many Lebanese Sunnis, the majority of whom are opposed to VSJ ideology. [136] In fact, Lebanese Hezbollah is actively involved in fighting VSJ in Syria both in support of Syrian President Assad's government and in an effort to keep VSJ from gaining a foothold in Lebanon.[137] Ayoob goes further, stating:

---

[134] Categories of Salafis to be discussed later in this thesis, based on Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 207–239.

[135] Erik Bleich, "Muslims and the State in the Post 9/11 West: Introduction," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 356.

[136] Bilal Y. Saab, and Magnus Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 10 (2007): 841.

[137] For more information, see the Nicholas Blanford, "Is al Qaeda About to Expand the 'Field of Jihad' to Lebanon?" *Christian Science Monitor*, February 17, 2014, http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2014/0217/Is-Al-Qaeda-about-to-expand-the-field-of-jihad-to-Lebanon.

Both Hamas and Hizbullah are organizations that fall well within the logic of the state system and do not have universal visions of a global jihad. In this sense, Hizbullah and Hamas are more similar to the Irish Republican Army or the Basque separatist group ETA than to the al-Qaeda network or Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia.[138]

There is an argument to be made that the focus on HAMAS and Hezbollah in current national strategies is a harmful distraction from VSJ. Hezbollah attacked the U.S. embassy in 1982 in an effort to oust foreign soldiers from Lebanon, not due to intrinsic hatred of the West or an adherence to violent Salafi jihadi ideology, and continues to focus on Israel in its local struggle for geography and power in the region. Saab and Ranstorp agree, saying,

Lumping Al Qaeda and Hizb'allah in the same basket will only do a disservice to the global counterterrorism campaign. Each entity poses a distinct set of challenges to the United States and the West. Underscoring their differences serves the global war on terrorism better than creating a sense of solidarity between them.[139]

Similarly, HAMAS is part of an insurgency that is the result of a conflict based on geography and civil rights, which has gone on for decades, and directly pits it against the Israeli government, not the U.S. Mearsheimer and Walt state, "In contrast to al Qaeda, in fact, the terrorist organizations that threaten Israel (such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah) do not attack the United States and do not pose a mortal threat to America's core security interests."[140] This supports the development of a more focused assessment on which to base a unified strategy to mitigate threats to the United States and its national security interests.

Defining the threat from VSJ is more useful than talking about an "organizational structure" of particular groups, which is common in the West. In trying to describe the threat, Tom Farer struggles, wondering, on one side is the U.S., arguably the most powerful nation on earth, and on the other side, what? He muses:

---

[138] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 21.

[139] Saab, and Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism," 848.

[140] Mearsheimer, and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, 63.

Not a state. Not even an organization, if one thinks in terms of some entity with the vertical lines of authority and responsibility. Rather, in Al Qaeda we seem to have a shifting cluster of self starting grouplets, in loose association, answerable finally to themselves, drawing inspiration, perhaps, from the iconic personality of Osama bin Laden, bonded by a particular interpretation of the Islamic faith, by a narrative of redeemable humiliation, and by a perceived enemy.[141]

Even this perspective falters in that it is focused on an individual; the VSJ threat goes beyond Osama bin Laden, beyond Ayman al Zawahiri, and beyond Daesh's Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. The U.S. needs to adjust its sights in order to truly see and understand the adversary beyond the context of military order of battle or transnational organized crime.

B. THE U.S. NEEDS PRECISE LANGUAGE TO DEFINE THE THREAT

Since 2001, many terms have been used to define the VSJ threat to the U.S. in strategy documents. Some of them were incorrect by definition, some exhibit an honest effort, but none have actually called them Salafi jihadis. In 2006, there was considerable concern regarding a term borrowed from the French government to refer to the to the terror threat to the U.S.: "Islamofascism,"[142] which was adopted by neo-conservatives in the U.S. for a time. In 2008, the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) drafted a document based on engagement with and input from American Muslims called, *Terminology to Define the Terrorists: Recommendations from American Muslims*.[143] DHS supported the argument put forth by this thesis, asserting that the U.S. should not use language that gives VSJ adherents like bin Laden the appearance of being more powerful and influential than they are; specifically using words that conflate VSJ with organizations like Hezbollah and HAMAS. DHS CRCL advocates referring to Salafi jihadists as a "death cult": "Cults, while often linked to mainstream religions, have a negative connotation."[144] Had this been incorporated into the discourse early on, it would

---

[141] Tom J. Farer, *Confronting Global Terrorism and American Neo-Conservatism: The Framework of a Liberal Grand Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2.

[142] Gary Kamiya, "Why We Can't Win the War on Terror," Salon, September 15, 2006, http://www.salon.com/2006/09/15/richardson_13.

[143] DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, *Terminology to Define the Terrorists*.

[144] Ibid., 4.

have served the purpose of decoupling the acts of 9/11 from Islam as a world religion and also would have reduced the perception of the threat as "existential," as it was initially portrayed. A cult is less threatening than the concept of a world religion on the warpath with America, which is how the threat from VSJ can be interpreted based on the general language currently in use. This DHS document made a solid effort to balance both the need of the government to define the specific threat and the intent to not offend or wrongly labeling all Muslims as terrorists by framing terrorism as "Islamic." Unfortunately, *Terminology to Define the Terrorists* does not appear to have influenced the political discourse.

It is interesting to consider, what if the cult reference had that been used beginning on September 12, 2001 to frame the threat posed by VSJ? U.S. strategies may have evolved very differently. This reference to VSJ as a cult at first seems dismissive, but there are accounts that discuss brainwashing of recruits, similar to what is done by cults. In this, model recruits have an understanding of the Quran is completely dependent on interpretations to which they are exposed (recitation is common with adherents),[145] so the recruiters espousing VSJ may find fertile ground in someone seeking religion and structure in their lives. To these individuals, the Salafi reference may not be quite as significant, as some VSJ adherents may not truly understand the tenets of Salafism. It is possible that some recruits, particularly in the West, are indoctrinated more by propaganda-type media about the abuse of Muslims at the hands of the West than with an actual understanding of Sharia or takfir. As evidence of this theory, AQ published an instruction book to guide recruitment of new adherents; in many ways, it reads more like the handbook of religious cult than an educational treatise on Salafist theology:

> (B)e careful of talking about the problems of the Muslims from the beginning (of the relationship) so as not to make the relationship appear as your recruiting him; he will say to himself, "you are doing all of this with

---

[145] For one account, see former CIA Field Officer Robert Baer's account of an interview with a 17-year-old would-be suicide bomber: Robert Baer, "A Talk with a Suicide Bomber," *Time*, July 20, 2007, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1645461,00.html.

me, just to recruit me, etc." Also, don't rush anything because there will be a proper time for everything.[146]

It is interesting to note, this recruitment guide references this movement as Salafi jihad and acknowledges, "it is a fact that most of the salafis have ideas against Al Qaida and the mujahideen. They have taken these ideas from their scholars."[147] This supports using the terminology VSJ.

The suggestion that the VSJ movement is a cult would benefit from further research, although if this could be proven, it would reflect harshly on the road the U.S. and the West has taken. The DHS CRCL report *Terminology to Define the Terrorists* acknowledges that while "the threat posed by terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda is far greater than that posed by most cult groups… 'cult' comparisons may advance strategic USG objectives by marginalizing those who falsely claim to represent ordinary Muslims."[148]

This DHS CRCL report also cautions against use of the term "Salafi jihadis" as having the potential to impact all Salafis negatively.[149] The problem with using the term "Salafi" is that the majority of Salafis, discussed in the next chapter, do not condone or advocate violence against civilians. DHS also discourages the use of the term "jihadi" on its own, arguing that it glorifies violence against civilians as a sanctioned part of the holy war they claim to be waging.[150] This point has been made time and time again by academia, government officials, and the media, but it still seems to be a part of the post-9/11 lexicon we cannot eliminate. The term *violent Salafi jihadi* fills the current gap in lexicon and addresses the lack of precision in language that has impacted a true comprehension of the threat, and the inability to accurately reflect it in national strategy. The point that the majority of Salafis do not believe in VSJ needs to be made

---

[146] Abu Amr Al Qa'idi, *A Course in the Art of Recruiting* , trans. by Mujahid, Abu and Abu Khalid, 2010, https://www.archive.org/stream/ACourseInTheArtOfRecruiting-RevisedJuly2010/A_Course_in_the_Art_of_Recruiting_-_Revised_July2010_djvu.txt, 6.

[147] Ibid.

[148] DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, *Terminology to Define the Terrorists*, 4.

[149] Ibid., 3.

[150] Ibid.

emphatically. It is not the Salafism that encourages the violence; it is the takfir ideology that condones the execution of those not like them, adopted from the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia, that makes the VSJ movement different.

The Department of Defense relies heavily on doctrine and common definitions, and as a result, appears to have the lead in setting government doctrine because it can, not necessarily because it should. This is a consequence of fighting VSJ as part of a "war." Friedman, Preble, and Harper argue that the phrase "war on terror" incorrectly implies that the military should be the leading instrument of U.S. efforts and that this struggle, like a declared war between nation-states, has a definite beginning and end. The war frame can also cause strategists to "conflate the disparate threats posed by terrorist organizations," the authors argue and this "plays into the terrorists' own rhetoric that the West is engaged in a war against Islam."[151]

"Counterterrorism" was redefined in a 2014 Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Publication 3-26 to mean: "Activities and operations taken to neutralize terrorists and their organizations and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals."[152] It is significant in that, while not a strategy per se, it comes closer than any of the reviewed documents when referencing VSJ, stopping just short of calling out the ideology and framing it as a "transnational network":

> Linked by radicalized interpretations of Islam, the most well-known network is al-Qa'ida, responsible for the attacks on September 11, 2001. Al-Qa'ida ideologues envision a complete break from all foreign influences in Muslim countries, and the creation of a new worldwide Islamic caliphate. Characteristic techniques employed by al-Qa'ida include suicide attacks and simultaneous bombings of different targets. To this day, al-Qa'ida and its affiliates remain a cohesive organization and threat to global stability..[153]

---

[151] Friedman, Harper, and Preble, *Terrorizing Ourselves*, 3.

[152] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterterrorism*, GL-3.

[153] Ibid., I-8.

The references to a cohesive organization reference is arguable, not only with reference to AQ and its so-called franchises, but relative to VSJ overall. Notably, this publication identified a change from the previous 2009 version in that it:

> Narrows the definition of counterterrorism (CT) to actions and activities to neutralize terrorists, their organizations, and networks; removes countering root causes and desired regional end states from the definition.[154]

This further narrows the Department of Defense approach to VSJ without quite defining what it is. This small change is significant in that it re-defines counterterrorism as hard power to be exercised against those (broadly defined) who commit terrorist acts. This presents many difficulties in that CT efforts are, as a result, somewhat standardized, regardless of the motivations, actual strength, or capability of the target to conduct a large-scale attack in the U.S.

As mentioned earlier, government personnel communicate with a common lexicon based on their mission and area of expertise. The current common lexicon belies a common understanding of very limited but specific threat that VSJ poses to the United States. The lack of common lexicon, such as "violent Salafi jihadism," or "VSJ," weakens the ability to of national strategies to focus on that specific threat. Instead, the various code words used among government agencies include "violent radical extremists," "Islamic radicals," or simply just "terrorism." These terms are counterproductive and not specific enough to be helpful.

At least one reference to VSJ was found in an official document, but this terminology did not catch on, failing to "brand" the movement as that which the U.S. should target, specifically. Salafi jihadism was referenced in the *Report of The Future of Terrorism Task Force*, published in 2007, provided to then Secretary for Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, by the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC). The introduction of this document asserts:

> *The most significant terrorist threat to the homeland today stems from a global movement, underpinned by a jihadist/Salafist ideology.* The

---

154 Ibid., iii.

members of this movement seek to overturn regimes considered to be apostate; to re-establish the Caliphate; and to impose an extremist, militant interpretation of Islam.[155]

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategy differs from the other counterterrorism strategies reviewed in that CVE efforts are focused on "homegrown violent extremists." While there is no mention of VSJ or Salafi jihadism, these federally supported efforts rely on local officials and community leaders to identify at risk individuals and are primarily focused on Muslim communities in the U.S. Would this effort be more effective if it was called "countering violent Salafi jihadi extremism?" It makes for an awkward and overly long acronym (CVSJE), but it does speak to the true concern. It is unclear how a strategy can make an impact if it is not precise in language and objectives, based on a common understanding. As it stands now, one might ask whether the CVE strategy targets violent white supremacist ideologues, such as the individual who murdered innocent civilians in a church in Charleston, South Carolina; if CVE strategy is primarily concerned with the use of terrorist tactics in the U.S, the focus beyond VSJ would be appropriate. However, there is no evidence that this is the case. There is a need to come to terms with what VSJ is in a way that does not offend all Muslims and makes clear that it is understood to be a small percentage of violent individuals (relative to the Muslim population). Allowing CVE to be subject to interpretation and potentially understood as a euphemism for "Islamic terrorists" is counterproductive.

A major concern about accepting VSJ to define the predominant foreign terrorist threat to the U.S. is how will the majority of Salafis, who are non-violent, react to the specificity of this terminology? Will they appreciate the distinction provided by the words "violent" and "jihadi"? These are questions for additional research and are not addressed here. This thesis makes the argument that the focus on the generic (but implied by omission as Islamic) references to "violent extremism" and radicalization is a worse choice. Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and the freedom to be radical and extreme are core American values. It is the violence here that is key; the

---

[155] Frank Ciluffo, and Lee Hamilton, *Report of the Future of Terrorism Task Force* (Washington, DC: Homeland Security Advisory Council, 2007), 3.

targeting civilians with violence in a coercive effort to force submission to an ideology is where the line must be drawn. Governments are free to have an open discussion with radicalized individuals and groups to provide another voice; this is a good thing. Forcing non-violent radicalized individuals underground for fear of being labeled "terrorists" limits them to small circles of influence where a violent narrative can be reinforced more easily than if open and honest dialogue, using very precise language, is encouraged and used in national strategy and political discourse.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

IV. ESTABLISH A FOUNDATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM

A. ISLAM, POORLY UNDERSTOOD IN THE WEST

In order to better understand VSJ and how it evolved, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of Islam. VSJ adherents claim to speak for Islam, but in fact they are competing for primacy among Muslims. According to Moghadam, while they "selectively pick from the Islamic tradition only those elements that advance their narrow agenda, they nevertheless draw from the same religious sources that inform the lives and practices of more than a billion other Muslims."[156] In order to build a unified strategy targeting VSJ, it is important to understand the broader context of Islam.

It has been difficult for U.S. officials to become knowledgeable on VSJ because the movement does not exist in a vacuum. One needs to come at the issue with at least a general comprehension of their narrative relative to Islam in general. In the foreword of Ademec's *The Historical Dictionary of Islam*, this is addressed up front: "All religions are hard to explain, but few seem to be as difficult as Islam…(it is) swayed by different currents whose adherents hold different views."[157] He goes on to say that the meaning of the writing, predominantly in Arabic, is "hard to convey to outsiders and not always entirely grasped by Muslims."[158] This statement could be made about adherents of any major religion, but as this thesis shows, it manifests in particular ways in Islam.

Islam is the second largest religion in the world,[159] and while Muslims believe in one God, they are quite diverse regarding interpretation. Much like other world religions, "Islam represents a basic unity of belief within a rich cultural diversity."[160] All Muslims

---

[156] Moghadam, "The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology," 16.

[157] Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Islam*, Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, no.37 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001), ix.

[158] Ibid.

[159] John Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1.

[160] Ibid., 2.

believe in "God, the Quran, Muhammad and the Five Pillars of Islam,"[161] but they are divided over the day-to-day questions of everyday life such as political participation, theology, interpretations of Islamic law, and how to deal with modernity.[162]

Islam is a monotheistic world religion that evolved from Judaism and Christianity, a concept that is not well understood in the West. Halverson, Goodall, and Corman explain, "Muslims believe that the Qu'ran are God's words as spoken through the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad, who was the 'last in a series of prophets that also includes Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.'"[163] References to Jewish and Christian holy books are found in Islam; a belief in descent of the faith from Abraham is common to all three religions. Much like Hebrew is the language of Jewish services, Latin the language of Roman Catholicism, and Greek the language of Orthodox Christianity, Arabic is the language of Islam. This, "despite the fact that 80% of the world's Muslims are "not Arabs and typically do not understand Arabic."[164] Muslims believe that Islam is the corrective version of both Judaism and Christianity, both of which had strayed from the original word of God due to human revisions to the original texts, such as reference to Jesus as the Son of God.[165]

Based on these commonalities, it is curious that most Westerners generally perceive Islam as a completely foreign religion. Joseph Rahme, in discussing the ethnocentrism of the term "Judeo-Christian," explains, "Islam considers itself the culmination, and is a continuation of the Judaic- Christian heritage. This is simply illustrated by the fact that Muslims accept both Moses and Jesus, among others, as the bearers of revelations from God."[166] He goes on to describe the term "Judeo-Christian"

---

[161] Ibid., 39.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Jeffrey R. Halverson, H. Lloyd Goodall Jr., and Steven R. Corman, eds. *Master Narratives of Islamic Extremism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 2.

[164] Ibid., 2.

[165] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 8.

[166] Joseph G. Rahme, "Ethnocentric and Stereotypical Concepts in the Study of Islamic and World History," *The History Teacher* 32, no. 4 (1999): 473–494.

as signifying a particularly Western perspective that minimizes the common foundation among the three religions.

The core beliefs of Muslims are anchored by the five pillars of Islam: the declaration of faith (there is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God); prayer; purification, or zakat, which is a tithe that provides a social safety net for the poor; fasting, which is done during the month of Ramadan; and the pilgrimage, or Hajj, to Mecca at least once in a lifetime if possible.[167] Mecca is the birthplace of Muhammad, and considered the most sacred place in the world by Muslims.[168]

The term *ummah*, which originated as a reference to the Medina community of Muslims and Jews, is used now as a term for the Islamic community,[169] wherever it may reside, regardless of tribe, nationality, or ethnicity. The existence of the ummah reinforces the social identity aspect of Islam, despite differences in interpretations of Islam or participation on nationalist endeavors.[170] As with many social identity constructs, it is also used to define "the other," or non-Muslims; it encourages unity of the in-group, particularly against external threats. In Sura 9:71, the Quran says: "The believers, men and women, are protectors of one another. They enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil."[171]

Generally speaking, Americans do not have any foundation for understanding Islam, or the nuances across the varied subsets of Islam, which is why it is important to understand and discourage the use of meaningless terminology like "Islamist extremist" in counterterrorism lexicon. As is explained later in this thesis, VSJ appeals to a relatively small number of Muslims who arguably violate the sanctity of the ummah by declaring apostate and killing Muslims who do not believe as they do.

---

[167] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 17–21.

[168] Ibid., 24.

[169] Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Islam*, 265.

[170] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 16.

[171] Ibid., 15.

B.   ISLAMISM, OR POLITICAL ISLAM

Islamism bears defining in the context of Islam in general, as the word "Islamist" is sometimes used as shorthand for "terrorist," which is used in U.S. strategies to refer to VSJ adherents. Islamism, or, political Islam, is not specific to a particular sect or school of thought. Ayoob defines Islamism as "a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives."[172] Like Islam itself, Islamism is quite diverse. Fuller explains that Islamism "cannot be properly viewed as an alternative to other ideologies…because it cannot be placed anywhere on an ideological spectrum…but (is) a religious-cultural-political framework on issues that most concern politically engaged Muslims."[173] The willingness to participate in a political framework is a commonality across Islamism, but many differences within can be explained using the quote made famous by former U.S. Speaker of the House, Thomas P. O'Neill: "all politics is local."[174] There are both local and global influences that impact the flavor of "Islamism" in a region or community. Much like Christianity has functioned in the West as a foundation for a social identity regardless of piety, Islamists use religion as the common ground by which to interpret and understand Muslim values in society. The language used by Islamists to generate support is grounded in the religion itself and used to justify the fight of ordinary Muslims against oppressive rulers.[175]

While the words and references common to Islam writ large support the popularity and accessibility of political Islam, the devil is in the details. When one starts to scratch the surface, the differences in interpretation and beliefs within Islam emerge to expose the fullness and diversity of the religion as well as significant differences between Islamist groups. This has been a significant challenge for U.S. political discourse, exemplified during the so-called Arab Spring. It was difficult to differentiate between who posed a threat, and who was advocating for representation in government; the

---

[172] Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam*, 2.

[173] Graham E. Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 193.

[174] Thomas P. O'Neill, and Gary Hymel, *All Politics is Local* (New York: Adams Media, 1994).

[175] Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam*, 10.

language used, such as "Islamist," "radical" and "extremist," muddied the waters.[176] The commonalities across the different schools of thought and approaches to maintaining the cultural and religious identity is important to understand, but these cannot solely guide Western comprehension. An understanding of the way Islamists use the appeal of general Islamic principles can be a useful tool, but there are significant differences in political goals and actual power struggles among Islamist movements. The main point here is that the category "Islamists" includes those who believe in political participation as a way to fulfill their religious vision, as opposed to violence. This opens the door to opportunities that may contribute to a national strategy to not only combat VSJ, but also marginalize the violent radicals relative to the greater Salafi community.

C.   SUNNI AND SHIA

It is helpful to understand the differences between Sunni and Shia as a foundation for an understanding of VSJ.[177] The split between Sunni and Shia dates back to the year 632 CE. The Prophet Muhammad had died without naming a successor, and two camps evolved: one backed Muhammad's friend and father-in-law, Abu Bakr to be caliph (Sunnis); the other (Shia), believing that the Prophet's successor should be a family member, supported Muhammad's cousin Ali. The majority Sunnis won out, and the next three caliphs were chosen by them. Ali did eventually become caliph; but when his son, Hussein, was killed in battle in 680 by the ruling Sunni caliph in what is now Iraq, the separation was solidified and resulted in a divergence in the practice of Islam.[178] The division between Sunni and Shia has resulted in very different historical perspectives. The Sunnis enjoyed a long period of power and success, a "golden age in which they were a great world power and civilization"[179] as the ruling majority under the Umayyad

---

[176] This perspective was provided by Charles Krauthammer, "Fruit of Arab Spring is Islamism," *The Charleston Gazette*, July 14, 2012, A.5.

[177] Sufism is a mystical variant of Islam, and is not addressed in this thesis. For more information, see Idries Shah, *The Sufis* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971).

[178] S. B. "What is the Difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims?" *The Economist*, May 28, 2013.

[179] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 41.

(661–750 CE)[180] and the Abbasid dynasties (750–1258 CE).[181] Conversely, the Shia were the underdogs, struggling "unsuccessfully during the same time period against Sunni rule."[182]

This division has manifested itself in modern times in the context of internal (e.g., Pakistan, Afghanistan) and external (e.g., Iraq and Iran) struggles between Sunni and Shia beginning in the 1980s.[183] Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran are also adversaries, and like the U.S. and Soviet Union in the Cold War, they support client states and movements in the Muslim world in a struggle for power, influence, and security in the region. This was seen clearly during the collapse of civil institutions in Iraq after the U.S. invasion (2003), as sectarian strife between Sunni and Shia filled the vacuum left by the removal of the fiercely secular Baathist (nominally Sunni) government by U.S. forces.[184] This rivalry has continued as the U.S. has withdrawn from Iraq.[185] Another example of this competition was seen in Bahrain in 2011. As financial center of the region, it has significance for both Saudi Arabia and Iran and is courted by both for influence and support.[186] More recently, while fighting in Yemen has sometimes been portrayed as terrorists fighting the government, there are indications that it has more to do with the conflict between Shia and Sunni, represented by Iran and Saudi Arabia.[187]

---

[180] *Britannia*, s.v., "Umayyad Dynasty," last modified April 24, 2013, http://www.britannica.com/topic/Umayyad-dynasty-Islamic-history.

[181] *Britannia*, s.v., "Abbasid Dynasty," last modified April 24, 2013, "http://www.britannica.com/topic/Abbasid-dynasty.

[182] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 41.

[183] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 224.

[184] For a comprehensive overview of the Sunni-Shia divide in Iraq and the region, see Chapter 6 of Nathan Gonzalez, *The Sunni-Shia Conflict: Understanding Sectarian Violence in the Middle East* (Mission Viejo, CA: Nortia Press, 2009).

[185] James F. Dobbins et al., "Withdrawal from Iraq: What are the Regional Implications?" *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 3 (2009): 1–27.

[186] "Commentary Says Iran-Saudi Relations Turned into 'Cold War' after Arab Uprising," *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, August 7, 2011.

[187] Maria Abi-Habib, and Adam Entous, "U.S. Widens Role in Saudi-Led Campaign against Houthi Rebels in Yemen: Washington has Concerns about Riyadh's Goals in the Conflict," *Wall Street Journal*, April 13, 2015.

A hermeneutic that may be valuable is the frame of Christian denominations of Protestantism and Catholicism. In an article published in the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette* in 2006, Albert Southwick describes the parallels in layman's terms.[188] He explains that Catholicism bears similarities to Shia, and Protestantism resembles Sunni. The differences are based in similar foundational structures. For Christians, the foundation is how they view Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and with Muslims, it is based on who they perceive to be the successor to Muhammad (Ali for the Shia, Abu Bakr for Sunni). Catholics and Shia follow powerful, ordained leaders (the Pope, priests; Ayatollahs and imams). Protestants and Sunni have more diverse and numerous centers of gravity, with individual clergy being less prominent in interpreting the religion. Shi'ites glorify martyrs and saints much like Catholics do. Southwick also makes the point that Christianity had its own era of religious violence, rivaling anything seen in the Muslim world[189]—a point that is not widely acknowledged in American discourse. Another parallel lies in the power of these comparative sects: Since the Reformation, Protestants have generally held the power in the English-speaking world as opposed to Catholics, and Sunnis are the majority in most of the Arab countries.[190] While current battles that are nominally waged due to this historical divergence and the assassination of Hussein can seem irrelevant in modern times, it may be helpful to note that the ancient sufferings of Jesus and Hussein are still annually commemorated by Catholics and Shia, both participating in bloody self-flagellation to honor those sacrifices.

D.   SALAFISM

Salafism is a Sunni reformist movement that evolved in response to a perceived "stagnation and weakness in the Islamic world and advocated a return to the basics of Islam;"[191] it is not violent in and of itself. It is based on the literal interpretation of the

---

[188] Albert B. Southwick, "When Religions Split, There's always Trouble Ahead," *Telegram & Gazette*, June 18, 2006.

[189] Ibid.

[190] *Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2009), 9–10.

[191] Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Islam*, 233.

Quran and the *Sunnah*[192] and on following the practices of the "salaf," or the Prophet's companions because they "learned about Islam directly from the messenger of God."[193] Major influences of Salafism include Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780–855), the founder of the Hanbali school of law; Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328); and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), the father of Wahhabism,[194] although many consider the fathers of Salafism to be Egyptian theologians Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) and his follower, Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905).[195] Moussalli contests this, arguing that while reformers such as al-Afghani and Abduh employed the concept of salaf or practicing as Muhammad's disciples did, "that does not make them salafists."[196] Each of these men advocated a strict interpretation of the *Quran* and Sunnah as the lone sources of theology and jurisprudence, as well as *tawhid* or "unity of God," which is "the crux of the Salafi creed."[197] Tawhid is based on the beliefs that there is one God, God alone is the creator, God is "supreme and unique," does not resemble anything known to man, and that only God should be worshipped.[198] Salafis believe that they should live as those who knew and followed the Prophet did; those first three generations of Muslims are considered the practitioners of pure Islam.

Salafis follow the Hanbali school of law, named for its founder Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, the most conservative and literalist of the four Sunni Orthodox schools of jurisprudence. Hanbali restricts sources of Islamic law to the Quran and the Sunnah, as its founder "favored a literalist interpretation of the Koran and Sunnah and rejected informed reasoning." [199] It is the law of the land in Saudi Arabia, and it is characterized by

---

[192] The Sunnah "explains and provides details for the laws found in the Quran," and "provides examples of the practical applications of these laws." "The Religion of Islam," Cooperative Office for Dawah in Rawdah, accessed October 10, 2015, http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/655/what-is-sunnah-part-2/.

[193] Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," 209.

[194] Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Islam*, 233.

[195] John Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 299.

[196] Ahmad Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who is the Enemy?* Conflicts Forum, 2009, http://conflictsforum.org/briefings/Wahhabism-Salafism-and-Islamism.pdf.

[197] Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," 208.

[198] Ibid., 209.

[199] Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Islam*, 237.

"extreme rigor and a literal interpretation of the holy texts."[200] Salafis eschew any logical or rational application or interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah, in conflict with some Islamic scholars. According to Ayoob, theologians like Muhammad Abduh of Egypt around the turn of the twentieth century advocated looking back to "pristine Islam" before it was corrupted by ignorance to illustrate that it was, in fact, "in total accord with the scientific positivism and rationality that underpinned modernity."[201] Salafism has an "appeal to the poorer and more deprived segments of society," and Salafis "take the view that Muslims—especially those in the West—should concern themselves with spiritual affairs."[202]

Salafis consider any type of worship aside from the worship of God to be sacrilege, or "shirk," and try to keep to themselves so as not to be corrupted by infidels. Moussalli comments, "For the same reason, they also reject all entertaining distractions: music, theatre and places of pleasure and entertainment."[203] This explains the destruction of many historic places in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq at the hands of VSJ adherents, as well as the prohibition of music and theater by the Taliban.

Wiktorowicz developed a framework to explain the significant nuances among Salafis. He breaks Salafism down into three groups: the Purists, the Politicos, and the Jihadis.[204] This is important to understand when developing strategies to combat *violent Salafi jihadis*. It is essential that, when invoking the name of a religious group in such a negative context, the qualifying language is necessary to ensure the precision of the term. Wiktorowicz clearly illustrates that, even within Salafism, there are important differences. Targeting the Purists, or even the Politicos, can undermine the U.S. government's goal of defeating the jihadis, or VSJ adherents, by forcing an alliance of necessity among these three very different groups against the outsiders (Christians and

---

[200] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 432.

[201] Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam*, 7.

[202] Olivier Roy, Antoine Sfeir, and John King, *The Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 301.

[203] Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism*, 13.

[204] Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." Refer to Figure 1 in this thesis.

Jews) attacking "Salafism." It forces them under the same tent when it is not necessarily in their nature to be allied.

As in other fundamentalist interpretations of world religions, Salafis take the word in their holy books literally, in an attempt to follow in the exact footsteps of the founders, Muhammad and the Pious Predecessors. The fundamentalist nature of Salafism can be compared to similar beliefs in Christianity and Judaism, adhering to a literal interpretation of scripture and a "purer" version of what they consider corruption of the religion, as noted by Richard Antoun.[205] He articulates, "In their attempt to purify the religion, Salafis try to emulate the supposedly true Islam of 'the pious predecessors' (al-salaf alsalih), embodied by the Prophet Muhammad and the first generations of Muslims."[206] Similar to the Christian Evangelical bumper sticker popularized in the U.S. asking "What Would Jesus Do? (WWJD?)" in an effort to remind people of Jesus Christ's life as reflected in the Christian Bible, Salafis view their spiritual lives through a similar lens with respect to Muhammad (what would Muhammad do?). According to Wiktorowicz:

> Salafi scholars must examine the life of the Prophet to extract model actions that transcend time and then apply these examples to the modern context. In essence, they ask what the Prophet would do if he were alive today. Given his life and example, how would he respond to contemporary issues and problems?[207]

This is the guidance that frames how Salafis live their lives.

To complicate things, Salafism is sometimes confused with Wahhabism, the puritanical school of thought named for its founder, Muhammad Bin Abd al-Wahhab. Wahhabism is predominantly associated with the Saudi export of Salafism, but it is different from Salafism in that it accepts the authority of the Saudi king. [208] Consequently, the royal family has used its enormous wealth to build and support

---

[205] Richard T. Antoun, *Understanding Fundamentalism: Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Movements* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2001).

[206] Joas Wagemakers, "Framing the "Threat to Islam": Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara' in Salafi Discourse," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2008): 3.

[207] Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," 215.

[208] Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism*, 8.

Wahhabi religious schools, or *madrassas*, worldwide. Like VSJ, Wahhabism condemns all who do not believe as they do as "*takfiri*."[209] Moussalli specifies, "Under the takfiri doctrine, al-Wahhab and his followers could deem fellow Muslims infidels should they engage in activities that in any way could be said to encroach on the sovereignty of the absolute Authority (that is, the King)."[210] The Wahhabi connection to Saudi Arabia's ruling monarchy is rejected by some Salafis in that Wahhabists view the Saudi royal family as a corrupt sponsor of Islam. In contrast, the purist Salafis are more likely to fall into the Wahhabi groupings based on their disinterest in unseating Muslim authority figures, no matter how corrupt, believing that corruption is better than a power vacuum that could lead to anarchy. Moussalli makes this point, asserting:

> Historically, the Salafists, and again unlike the Islamists, have not only developed a moderate stance towards existing rulers, but even argued that Muslims must obey their rulers, whether just or unjust, on the condition that they do not command committing any sin… to criticize a legitimate ruler might bring about anarchism, an act that is an absolute deviation from the salafist manhaj (method).[211]

This is where VSJ breaks with other Salafi beliefs; VSJ considers corrupt Muslim rulers, which would include anyone allied with the U.S. as fair game and seeks to not only depose, but to replace them. Daesh has taken this concept further than previous VSJ inspired groups in that it has conquered and taken over territory, governing it to some extent.

Salafis believe only they are true Muslims. This is common among fundamentalists across religions who believe that they alone are chosen by God and exclude outsiders (the *Other*) who aim to contaminate their faith or tempt them to behave contrary to their beliefs. In his examination of fundamentalism in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, Richard Antoun discusses how self-segregation is used to prevent corruption of these true believers who follow a strict and literal interpretation of scripture, forming a

---

[209] Ibid., 7.

[210] Alastair Crooke, "You Can't Understand ISIS if You Don't Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia," *Huffington Post Online*, August 27, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html.

[211] Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism*, 16.

common thread to fundamentalism in Islam (Salafis), Christianity (Evangelicals) and Judaism (Haredim).[212]

As defined by Wiktorowicz, the "Purists" are the self-segregating fundamentalists; those who see themselves as maintaining and propagating the pure version of Islam as Muhammad practiced it. They rely on the contextual interpretation related to Muhammad's time in Mecca, when he focused on religious education, or spreading the word of Islam. As Muhammad's followers were a minority in Mecca, then populated by "pagan cults," specifically his own tribe of Quraysh, Muhammad took a peaceful approach to spreading the word of God.[213] Rebellion against those in power could have instigated violent repression, which would directly prevent him from his goal of preaching Islam.

Purists view Judaism and Christianity as religions that are corrupt and pose an existential threat to Islam, and this is a part of the Islamic narrative that is very important for Westerners to understand. It is based in the core writings of Islam, and when taken literally, it supports an intrinsic suspicion of the motives of non-Muslims. Wiktorowicz explains this suspicion, partly derived from the Quran 3:118, which states, "The Jews and Christians will never be pleased with you until you change your religion."[214] He goes on to acknowledge "a conspiratorial view of non- Muslims as arch-enemies driven by a desire to pull Muslims away from their beliefs. This is important to understand when developing counterterrorism strategies, and attempting to impose western values on Muslim cultures."[215]

Purist Salafis who have settled in Europe try to isolate themselves from those they consider a threat to their complete dedication and literal following of the holy books. For obvious reasons, they are the subject of concern based on their insularity and literalist Salafist beliefs. They limit their interactions with the broader society, often developing enclave communities that function like Salafi ghettos. They reject association with non-

---

[212] Antoun, *Understanding Fundamentalism*.

[213] Esposito, *The Oxford History of Islam*, 8–9.

[214] Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," 218.

[215] Ibid.

Muslims in their countries of residence and instead view themselves as part of an international imagined community of true believers. Their identity is predicated on their creed and not their country.[216] They exist in, but are not part of, the larger society, and much like the Amish in Pennsylvania, they reject the potential corruption of values and ideals.

The "Politicos," are the Islamists of Salafism, who see the way to an Islamic society as participation in the political system. Politicos are at odds with the Purist concept that Muslims must endure corrupt Muslim rulers and be satisfied to have an advisory role. [217] The most recent example of Salafi Islamists, or "Politicos" in Wiktorowicz's framework, is the Salafist al Nour Party in Egypt. According to Khalil as-Anani, the al Nour Party is in a power struggle with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) that is rooted in 40 years of Egyptian history. He also observes,

> The current crisis between the Brotherhood and the Salafists reveals that power, and neither religion nor ideology, is the ultimate goal of Islamists, and their bid to grab it might usher in a new era of intra-Islamist conflict with unpredictable consequences.[218]

This is a reflection of how complex the ground truth often is. In 2011, al Nour and the MB entered into a coalition that successfully passed proposed constitutional amendments; a few months later, divisions over advocating Sharia law during the protests of July 2011 ended the alliance.[219] This is just one example among many that illustrates the complexity and nuance that U.S. national strategies do not address.

Wiktorowicz's third category, the "Jihadis," are the subject of the next chapter.

---

[216] Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst & Co., 2004), 275–287; Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 251–252.

[217] Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism*.

[218] Khalil Anani, "The Salafi-Brotherhood Feud in Egypt," *Al Monitor*, February 21, 2013, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/02/muslim-brotherhood-salafist-feud-in-egypt.html.

[219] Stephane Lacroix, "Sheikhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism," Brookings Doha Center, July 2012, http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/06/07-egyptian-salafism-lacroix.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

V. UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT: VIOLENT SALAFI JIHADISM

> Any attempt to defeat the enemy that involves outwitting and deceiving him must be preceded by an endeavor to understand him.
>
> Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*

A. AN OVERVIEW OF VSJ

This thesis argues that a unified national strategy to combat VSJ would strengthen U.S. efforts to diminish or eliminate this threat. The main premise of this argument is that the vague and imprecise language currently in strategy documents is counterproductive and due, to an extent, to a lack of understanding of what VSJ is. This chapter provides an overview of VSJ, the history of its evolution, and how it has spread, as well as what adherents want and why they target the U.S.

The jihadists are the most infamous of the three categories of Salafism Wiktorowicz describes but still not fully understood. VSJ promotes an extremely conservative form of Islam, promoting strict adherence to Sharia as the law of the land by coercion or by force. VSJ has adherents in many countries, and as noted by Jones in the RAND report cited earlier, was the ideology motivating at least 49 identified groups as of 2013.[220] Many such groups evolved in a very local context; some developed as a result of Saudi influence; and some have associated their local grievances with the "global" jihad in what Marret referred to as "glocal" movements.[221]

VSJ does not fit into a Western type organizational chart, as was noted earlier by Raufer, but that is how the threat is portrayed in U.S. national strategies. Both the 2015 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) and the 2015 *National Military Strategy* (NMS) refer to the terrorist adversary as an organization, as opposed to an ideology or a movement. The NSS refers to the threat generically as terrorist organizations and networks, in the same

---

[220] Jones, *A Persistent Threat*, 27.

[221] Marret, "Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb."

breath with transnational organized crime organizations and networks. This may be partly due to the fact that military and law enforcement have the lead for U.S. strategies, and military and criminal organizational structures are how, in general, they frame the adversary's structure at a high level. In an effort to provide a better understanding of VSJ, how it fits in with the larger Islamic construct, and why it is important to refer to it specifically and accurately in a national strategy, a diagram may be helpful (see Figure 1). VSJ exists under the broad umbrella of Sunni Islam, but it is relatively small segment of Salafists; this should make clear that more precise language is needed.

Figure 1.   Where VSJ Fits in Islam
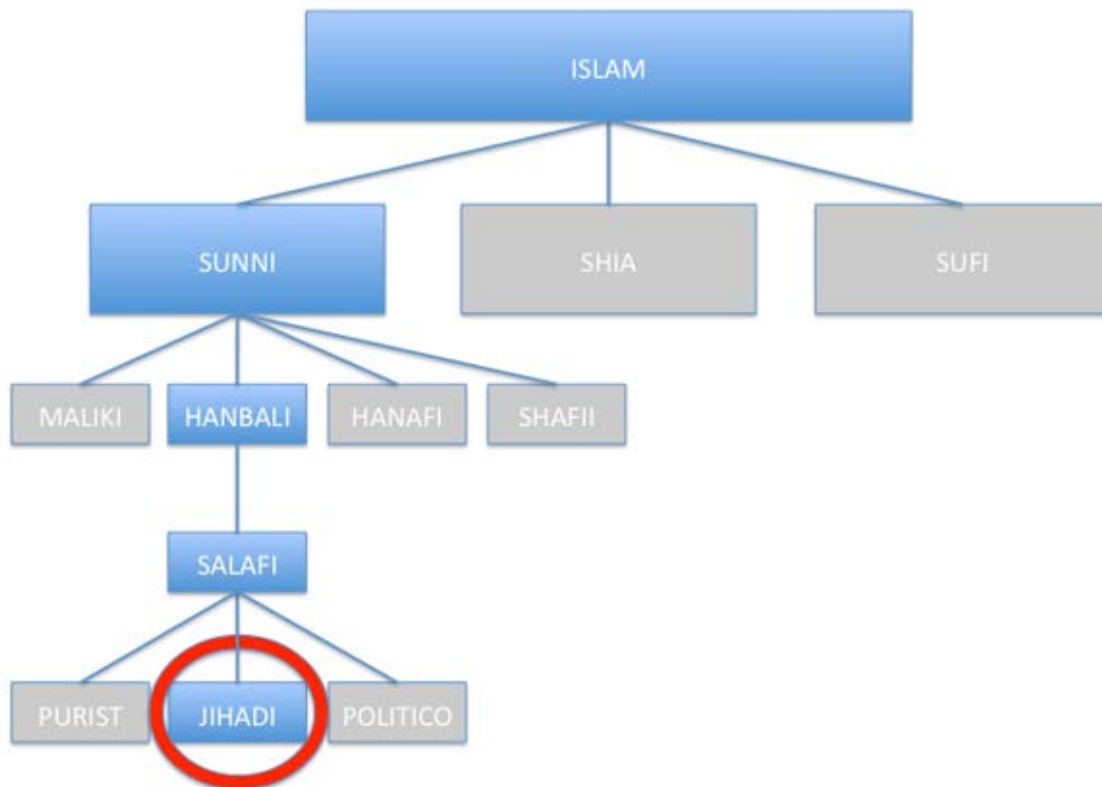
With respect to using the term VSJ to replace "Islamic terrorist," "violent extremist," "radical Islamist," and similar inaccurate terms, there is a danger that the references to "Salafi" as part of VSJ will reflect on peaceful, albeit "radical" or

70

"puritanical" practitioners of the religion, instead of focusing on the violent cult-like VSJ movement. Even though it is to some extent redundant, this thesis argues for the need to add "violent" to the accepted term "Salafi jihadi" to ensure there is no confusion about the nature of the ideology that poses a threat to the U.S. Due to the ambiguous nature of the language used in strategies and political discourse related to VSJ, Salafism "has incorrectly become synonymous with jihadi ideology. However, most Salafis—while extremely puritanical—reject suicide bombing and violence."[222] It is important that policymakers understand that VSJs are *a subset* of Salafis, separated by their adherence to violence and takfir. The VSJ movement is what the U.S. worries about, evidenced by the numerous references in national strategy to the threat of AQ and its "affiliates and adherents"[223] and, more recently, by FBI Director James Comey, who called Daesh a more serious threat to the U.S. than AQ.[224]

B.   HOW VSJ EVOLVED

There are differing perspectives as to where VSJ came from and when, particularly as it is personified by AQ. VSJ can trace its literalist roots to the Wahhabism that was adopted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Wahhabism emphasizes the notion of takfir, which has been used by the VSJ movement for decades to justify the murder of Muslims not aligned with its worldview. There has been speculation that the 1979 siege of the Grand Mosque in Mecca inspired bin Laden to lead what has become VSJ,[225] but it is more likely that he became a hub for already existing movements that were evolving in Muslim countries as a result of the coalescence of jihadi ideology that emerged from Afghanistan in the 1980s. Kepel first noticed them as an "international brigade of jihad

---

[222]Angelique Chrisafis, Patrick Kingsley, and Peter Beaumont, "World: The Violent Tide of Salafism That is Threatening the Arab Spring: A Series of Repressive Dictatorships Have Been Brought Down in North Africa, but the Ensuing Struggles for Power Have Left a Vacuum that has Allowed the Rise of an Extremist Movement that is Gathering Both Force and Supporters," *The Observer*, February 10, 2013.

[223] The 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* mentions this term 42 times.

[224] James Comey, "The Complexity of Today's Global Threat Environment," July 22, 2015, You Tube video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RyVXLKO0DM.

[225] Yaroslav Trofimov, *The Siege of Mecca: The 1979 Uprising at Islam's Holiest Shrine* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008).

veterans…outside of the control of any state…suddenly available to serve Islamist causes anywhere in the world...(and who) perceived the world in the light of religious doctrine and armed violence."[226] This was the first observance of VSJ as a movement.

Takfir is a central tenet of VSJ. Takfir began as a *fatwa*, or formal legal opinion, issued by Sheik Ibn Taymiyya against the Mongols in the fourteenth century. The Mongols had driven Ibn Taymiyya's family from their home, and he needed a way to justify fighting against other Muslims.[227] While the Mongols had converted to Islam, they continued to follow the law of Geghis Kahn as opposed to Sharia, and therefore Ibn Taymiyyah was able to pronounce takfir on them. [228] Takfir labels subjects as unbelievers, or *kafirs*, and permits the expulsion Muslims who have turned away from Islam. VSJ adherents similarly interpret takfir as justification for the murder of Muslims who practice Islam differently from them. Firro confirms that takfir has been interpreted differently by various scholars and has been used in power struggles internal to Muslim countries.[229] Kepel cites the examples in the 1990s of Wahhabi clerics and the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) pronouncing political adversaries as kafir in their own political interests.[230]

VSJ adherents have perpetrated most of the terrorist attacks against the U.S. and the West over the past 20 years. In Moghadam's analysis of suicide bombings and who was predominantly responsible for them from 1981 to 2007, the data points to VSJ groups as dominant since the late 1990s. After the U.S. invasion in 2003, Iraq became their focal point: "Of the 1,020 suicide attacks in Iraq recorded in the data set, 208 were claimed by Salafi jihadist groups…anecdotal accounts suggest that the overwhelming number of all suicide attacks in Iraq are conducted by Salafi jihadist groups."[231]

---

[226] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 219.

[227] Steven Brooke, "The Preacher and the Jihadi," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 3, (2006): 55.

[228] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 42.

[229] Tarik K. Firro, "The Political Context of Early Wahhabi Discourse of Takfir," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 5 (2013): 776.

[230] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 216, 269.

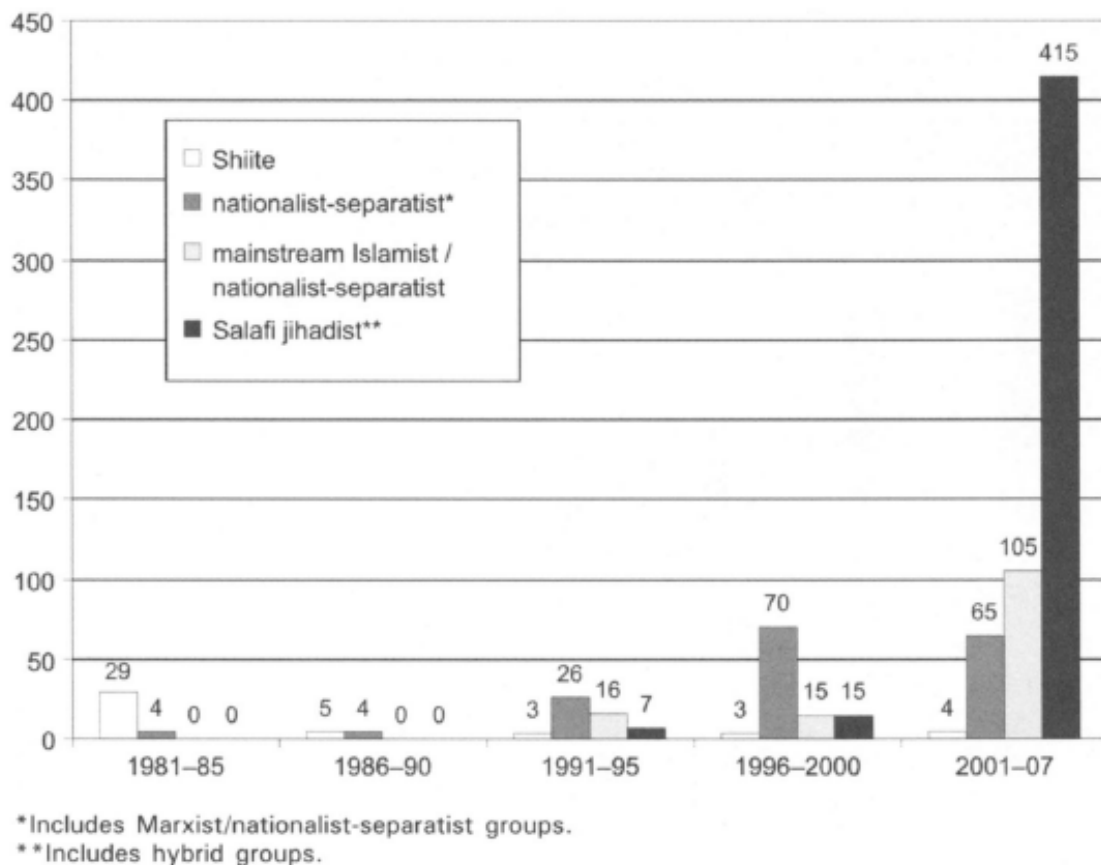[231] Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom," 56.

According to Moghadam:

Al-Qaeda and its Salafi jihadist ideology have produced an altogether new pattern of suicide attacks, namely, 'globalized suicide missions,' which can be distinguished from 'localized' suicide missions, the more traditional pattern of suicide attacks. Localized and globalized patterns of suicide missions differ in five key areas: the types of conflicts in which these attacks are used; group ideology; the geographic scope of these actors; their target definition; and their goals.[232]

Figure 2 shows the prevalence of Salafi Jihadi suicide attacks compared to other groups that use that tactic.

Figure 2.   Number of Attacks by Ideology December 1981–March 2008

*Includes Marxist/nationalist-separatist groups.
**Includes hybrid groups.

Source: Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom," 70.

---

[232] Ibid., 71. Specifically, reference Table 2.

C.   WAHHABISM AND VSJ

Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism can be considered the foundation for VSJ, although the establishment of that movement, now an enemy of the Saudi government, was unintentional. The origin of the alliance between Wahhabism and Saudi Arabia dates back to the eighteenth century, when Wahhab joined with a local tribal chief, Muhammad ibn Saud, to "legitimate his jihad to subdue and unite the tribes of Arabia, converting them to this puritanical version of Islam."[233] After losing power to Egypt in the early nineteenth century, Abdulaziz Ibn Saud restored the kingdom in the early twentieth century, along with Wahhabism.

During the last century and continuing to the present day, Wahhabis and the Saudi royal family established a mutually beneficial relationship, each compromising for what they saw as the greater good. With support from the Council of Senior Scholars, or *ulema*, the Saudi royal family has maintained its hold on power, despite displaying un-Islamic behavior over the years. The Saudi ulema has turned a blind eye to the Westernized behavior of the royal family in return for dominating Saudi societal norms in the kingdom (such as the prohibition on women driving) and taking advantage of vast government and charitable resources to spread their ultraconservative version of Islam around the world. As early as the 1960s, the House of Saud was spreading Wahhabism internationally by using the profits from oil sales to establish Wahhabi schools and build mosques in other countries run by Wahhabi clerics. According to Kepel, this effort was intended to counter the influence of Nasser's Egypt, and spread a very conservative, literal, and loyal (to Saudi Arabia) version of Salafism across the region.[234] This is significant to understanding the power structure and educational apparatus that supports VSJ.

VSJ incorporates much of the Saudi supported Wahhabi doctrine into the overarching ideology, but it does not accept the Saudi royal family, targeting it with

---

[233] Esposito. *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 50.

[234] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 52.

violence along with others deemed "apostates."[235] However, Saudi funding continues to support extremist Wahhabi mosques around the world, fueling the VSJ movement. According to Kepel, Saudis used the considerable profits from the sale of oil to "reach out and spread Wahhabism across the Muslim world ... to 'Wahhabize' Islam worldwide."[236] According to a former MI6 agent, the Saudis' intent was to reduce the "multitude of voices within the religion to a 'single creed'—a movement which would transcend national divisions. Billions of dollars were—and continue to be—invested in this manifestation of soft power."[237] This continues to be a problem for many countries, particularly those like Tunisia that are struggling to establish a democracy in the wake of the "Arab Spring" of 2012, and should be acknowledged in a U.S. national strategy.

There have been multiple geopolitical influences that contributed to growth and spread of VSJ in countries across the African, European, and Asian landscapes. A perfect storm occurred following the Soviet invasion in 1979; Islamic fighters of all types came to the defense of a Muslim nation attacked by a non-Muslim power. Afghan Pashtuns, the largest community in Afghanistan, [238] were Deobandi Muslims, a movement that originated in nineteenth century India "to train a corps of ulemas capable of issuing fatwas on all aspects of daily life…similar to the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia."[239] Saudi Arabia took advantage of the opportunity to influence a broad population of Muslims joining that fight and infused the Deobandi seminaries with funding in exchange for exerting Wahhabi influence over the teachings.[240] The influence of these Saudi-funded Wahhabi teachers set the stage for the extreme VSJ that manifested after the war as the Taliban.[241]

---

[235] Among many attacks on the Saudi royal family, the 2009 attempt to assassinate Prince Muhammed Abdul Aziz al-Saud stands out for its innovation and audacity for its use of a prototype device used in the failed "Underwear Bomber" plot in the U.S.

[236] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 52.

[237] Crooke, "You can't Understand ISIS if You Don't Know," 61.

[238] Luv Puri, "The Past and Future of Deobandi Islam," *The CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 11 (November 3, 2009): 19.

[239] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 58.

[240] Puri, "The Past and Future of Deobandi Islam,"19–22.

[241] Olivier Roy, "Islam and Foreign Policy: Central Asia and the Arab-Persian World," in *History of Pakistan and Its Origins*, ed. Christophe Jaffrelot (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 140.

After the Soviets were expelled from Afghanistan and as foreign fighters dispersed to other battlefields or returned to their home countries, Iraq's Saddam Hussein invaded his wealthy neighbor to the south, Kuwait, rattling Saudi Arabia, Kuwait's neighbor to the west. The Saudi government called on the U.S. and other Westerners to help repel the Iraqi army, which inflamed fundamentalist Muslims far beyond Saudi borders.[242] It was at this point, Kepel writes that what we refer to as modern "jihadist-salafism" was spawned from its Wahhabist parentage into a new "hybrid Islamist ideology whose first doctrinal principle was to rationalise the existence and behaviour of militants."[243]

Disillusioned Wahhabists like Osama bin Laden, who had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan, decried the Saudi regime for allowing "infidels" on Holy Land. The new breed of Salafi jihadi rejected the Saudi authority over them, referring to them as "sheikists." Kepel notes that the newly branded movement condemned the sheikists for "submitting to the non-Muslim United States, and their public and private vices."[244]

D.   THE SPREAD OF VSJ

Osama bin Laden, who was present in Afghanistan during the war and provided financial support to the mujahedeen, became a de facto leading figure representing the global VSJ movement, sending an open letter to the Saudi King in 1997 decrying the apostasy of the regime.[245] He specifically called attention to the fact that U.S. military personnel should not be allowed in Saudi Arabia, or "the Land of the Two Holy Places" (in reference to Mecca and Medina), and further asserted that Americans should leave all Muslim countries. The staging of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia to contain Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was a humiliation for bin Laden and other Muslims, and seen as supremely disrespectful. Bin Laden accused the House of Saud of

---

[242] For a more detailed account of the political complexities of this time and how it relates to the emergence of VSJ, see Chapter 9, "From the Gulf War to the Taliban Jihad," of Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*.

[243] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 219.

[244] Ibid., 220.

[245] Osama bin Laden, "Full Text: bin Laden's 'Letter to America,'" *The Guardian,* November 24, 2002, sec. World News.

being under the control of the Americans, who were in turn in league with Israel against Muslims.

This has been a continuing theme in the VSJ narrative: the U.S. is seen as supporting the royal family in Saudi Arabia based on the need for oil and as an ally in the Persian Gulf region against Iran, and Saudi Arabia depends on the U.S. for military support and as a stable market for its oil. This mutually beneficial relationship figures prominently in the evolving VSJ narrative and influenced the change from targeting the "near enemy" (local corrupt and "un-Islamic regimes") to the "far enemy" (the U.S. and Israel) by bin Laden and his followers.[246] Bin Laden also included in his list of U.S. crimes the U.S. government's sanctions against Iraq (and responsibility for the deaths of children denied medicine by those sanctions) and its support for oppressive regimes in Muslim countries. Bin Laden's letter identified the issues that became common themes accompanying the evolution of VSJ under the mantle of "al Qa'ida,"[247] and in fact, became the basis on which AQ was founded.[248]

After the mujahedeen forces repelled the Soviet Army (with significant foreign assistance), U.S. interest, and therefore influence, in Afghanistan waned. Without sufficient resources on the ground, the U.S. did not foresee the potential impact of the rise of the Taliban.[249] Many countries were involved in backing certain players in support of their own interests in Afghanistan during the 1990s, most significantly Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The relatively minor involvement the U.S. did have was in support of the Northern Alliance, led by the so-called Lion of Panshir, Ahmed Shah Massoud.[250] Massoud fought against the Taliban in the 1990s and was eventually murdered by VSJ adherents in 2001. During this time, the Taliban provided safe haven for bin Laden.

---

[246] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 19.

[247] For a detailed account of how bin Laden and AQ evolved in the years before 9/11, see Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

[248] Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism*, 10.

[249] Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2004), Kindle location 15406.

[250] For a detailed account of the ebbs and flows of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan during this period, see Coll, *Ghost Wars*.

U.S. support of the Afghan "mujahedeen" in the war against the Soviets contributed to unintended consequences, one of which was the rise of the Taliban. The war against the Soviets also produced a generation of soldiers across the region who saw themselves as defenders of Islam.[251] Volunteer fighters were recruited across the region to fight in Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Kashmir.[252] The origins of AQ as the first significant manifestation of VSJ, what Marret referred to as a "glocal" movement, can be traced to these "mujahedeen" who responded to an international call to arms in defense of Muslims against non-Muslim aggressors.

The Saudi strategy of spreading a puritanical version of Islam was executed not only by Wahhabi clerics in Saudi funded mosques but also by these veterans of the Afghan war. One example of this was in Chechnya, which experienced a transition toward VSJ with the arrival of Samer ben Saleh ben Abdallah al-Sweleim, a Saudi veteran of the Afghan War also known as Emir Khattab. Khattab arrived in Chechnya in 1995 to serve as an advisor to the Chechen rebellion against the Russian Army, along with many other veterans who saw this as another theater to promote VSJ. As Chechnya was facing Russia without any additional foreign support, the foreign fighters were very welcome, and they had tremendous influence on the locals. As Williams discusses:

> Chechens in the Islamic *cemaats* (platoons) began to wear Wahhabi-style beards, to outlaw alcohol, and to construct the Russian opponents they had once shared a Communist homeland with as *kafirs* (infidels)…The arrival of Khattab's Arab holy fighters began to successfully graft the concept of *jihad* onto the secular, Sovietized Chechens' independence struggle.[253]

Another example of the VSJ fighters spreading their ideology on a foreign battlefield took place in former Yugoslavia after that country disintegrated into a sectarian war. Bosnian Muslims, or Bosniaks, were under siege by Serbs, the worst single act of violence being the massacre of 7000 Muslim boys and men at Srebrenica. The

---

[251] Kepel, and Roberts, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 219.

[252] Yaroslav Trofimov, *Faith at War: A Journey on the Frontlines of Islam, from Baghdad to Timbuktu* (New York: Picador, 2005), 70, 84, 285.

[253] Bryan Glyn Williams, "Jihad and Ethnicity in Post-Communist Eurasia: On the Trail of Transnational Islamic Holy Warriors in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Chechnya and Kosovo," *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 2, no. 3–4 (2003): 16.

violent Salafi jihadi veterans of Afghanistan rallied to defend the Bosniaks, arriving in the summer of 1992. Within a year, they had formed one brigade; by the war's end in 1995, they had 10 brigades and between four and six thousand fighters.[254] The war provided combat training opportunities for the Afghan veterans and newcomers alike; however, even the Bosniaks, who also welcomed the VSJ foreign fighters who came to defend them, understood that their underlying motivation was to spread the ideology. A Bosniak told Trofimov after the war, "The primary goal of all the Arabs here was first to teach us religion, then help with the war."[255]

In fact, many VSJ adherents who figured prominently in attacks against the US, participated in the Balkan War, including Osama bin Laden, who was provided a "Bosnian passport in September 1999 and subsequently had at least one personal audience with President Izetbegovic."[256] In addition to bin Laden:

> (V)eterans of the Bosnian jihad in the 1990s included people such as Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, mastermind of the 9/11 attacks; Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, involved in the attack on the USS *Cole*; Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, involved in the August 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa; Abu Hamza al-Masri, the spiritual father of the July 2005 London Underground bombings; and Zaki ur-Rehman Lakhvi, one of the participants in the November 2008 Mumbai bombings.[257]

Trofimov observes that U.S. actions during the war in the Balkans were interpreted by many Bosniaks and Muslims in the region as anti-Islam, feeding into the VSJ narrative, in his book "Faith at War."[258] In addition to the massacres at Srebrenica, he asserts that the post 9/11 extradition of six Algerian fighters from Bosnia-Herzegovina by the U.S. to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba confirmed for some that the U.S. was fighting a war against Muslims. Additionally, the U.S. and allies prevented the Bosniaks from arming sufficiently to protect themselves, while the Serbs had the weaponry of the former

---

[254] Aristotle Tziampiris, "Assessing Islamic Terrorism in the Western Balkans: The State of the Debate," *Journal of Balkan & Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 2 (2009): 213.

[255] Trofimov, *Faith at War*, 284.

[256] Tziampiris, "Assessing Islamic Terrorism in the Western Balkans," 213.

[257] Gordon Bardos, "Jihad and the Balkans: The Next Generation," *World Affairs* (September–October 2014), http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/jihad-balkans-next-generation.

[258] Trofimov, *Faith at War*.

Yugoslav military to use against the Bosniaks. As a result, the nature of the Muslim community, once more European in nature, has morphed into something far more radical. As Esad Hecimovic, a leading expert on the Bosnian jihadi movement, has noted:

> There is now a new generation of Islamic preachers in Bosnia who were educated after the war at Islamic universities in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and other countries. . . . Thus, it is no longer possible to distinguish between 'imported' and 'local' versions of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina anymore.[259]

With the spread of VSJ by the veterans of the Afghan war, the movement was no longer tied to a specific geography nor to a government sponsor but spread across the Muslim world to fight on behalf of Sunni Muslims in a number of countries.[260] This was evidenced during the first half of the Iraq War, when Sunnis needed support against the newly empowered Shia; while it does not mean that these Sunnis became true believers in VSJ, it did provide an advantage for recruiters to the movement. It is important to note that the VSJ adherents' proselytizing and efforts to convert and recruit Muslims to their intolerant, literal, and violent interpretation of Salafism has not always met with success. At times, VSJ adherents have been expelled from Muslim communities, as happened in Iraq[261] during the so-called "Sunni Awakening" and in Kosovo in the battle between Albanian Muslims and Orthodox Christians in 1999.[262]

E.   VSJ AND THE UNITED STATES

The question of "why they hate us," posited in many opinion pieces and speculation in the U.S. after the September 11 attacks, did not focus on who "they" were. There are clear indicators that some U.S. policy actions have had unintended consequences regarding the expansion of VSJ; acknowledgement of this means that U.S.

---

[259] See Esad Hećimović, "Radical Movements: A Challenge for Moderate Balkan-Islam?" *Austrian Armed Forces* (August 2008), http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/rel_exterm_vs_fried_beweg_05_radical_movements_moderate_balkan_islam_e_hecimovic_17.pdf, 100.

[260] The spread of VSJ across Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, Croatia, and Tunisia is described in Trofimov, *Faith at War*.

[261] For more information, see Andrew Phillip, "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2009): 6484.

[262] Williams, "Jihad and Ethnicity in Post-Communist Eurasia," 16.

strategies can also impact the environment positively. That is where the national strategy needs to come in to the discussion.

The theme of VSJ as a reform movement, the main goal of which is gaining primacy in the Muslim world, was explored by Martin and Smith.[263] They argue that, in fact, VSJ is first and foremost at war with Muslims who do not believe as they do. Martin and Smith posit, "what is often regarded as a global jihad against the West is, arguably, an incorrect, or at least a more nuanced, position."[264] The destruction of United States, specifically, and the West in general, they say, is peripheral to that internal struggle and used more as a means to an end than a true objective. In talking about the focus of AQ's propaganda on demonization of the West, they note that it "usefully deflects attention away from its core objective of asserting its dominance within Sunni Islam, or more specifically Al Qaeda's interpretation of Islam."[265]

There have been many portrayals of what the VSJ movement hopes to achieve in U.S. political discourse, which as a matter of foundation needs to be clear in order to strategize effectively against it. In the struggle to understand the threat, the first *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* focused on the 9/11 attacks themselves, framing them as "acts of war against the United States of America and its allies, and against the very idea of civilized society."[266] However, Martin and Smith argue that a more comprehensive study of VSJ indicates that the primary goal of the movement is "first and foremost to secure the dominance of the Salafist interpretation of Islam."[267] They go on to explain that, the "fixation on the threat Al Qaeda's 'global jihad' poses to the West, directly or indirectly, has led to a partial assessment of its aims and motives."[268] U.S. strategies have not sufficiently capitalized on the fact that VSJ primarily targets other Muslims and is focused on what it considers "Muslim lands," as opposed to the actual

---

[263] Martin, and Smith, "Every Kingdom Divided against Itself Will be Ruined," 672, 695.

[264] Ibid., 682.

[265] Ibid., 673.

[266] White House, *National Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, 1.

[267] Martin, and Smith, "Every Kingdom Divided against Itself Will be Ruined," 672.

[268] Ibid., 673.

globe. The messaging that their fight is with the U.S., or the "West," while accurate to the extent it feeds into their primary goal, is a convenient distraction from their ultimate objective. Osama bin Laden's "Letter to America," published in 2002, illustrates this by focusing on the U.S. and emphasizing the West versus Islam narrative, portraying AQ as playing offensive defense based on U.S. actions in Muslim lands.[269]

The U.S. continues to act tactically against VSJ in the Middle East and beyond, not necessarily seeking to impact the broader movement. The U.S. military has conducted counterterrorism operations across northern Africa, the Middle East, and Asia in dozens of countries over the past decade. These actions are in general tactically oriented, pursuing individuals or organizations, and not looking at VSJ as a single underlying issue. U.S. involvement across the region, including in the civil war in Syria, with the unstable Shia government in Iraq, against AQ in northwest Pakistan and southeastern Afghanistan along with the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Shabaab in Somalia, and as well as VSJ inspired groups in Libya can contribute to the popularity of these groups at the local level. An overarching strategy to deal with VSJ across the board in a manner that focuses on it first and foremost has the potential to unify national vision and to be less reactive to events independent of that larger goal. These tactical operations have kept the U.S. military in the crosshairs of VSJ inspired groups, and have influenced sympathetic individuals in the U.S. as well. In referencing VSJ inspired plots against military targets in the U.S., Lieutenant Colonel Sawyer of the Countering Terrorism Center at West Point concludes,

> To an Al Qaeda adherent, the U.S. military represents the manifestation of American foreign policy more so than any other target choice as the military—in Al Qaeda's narrative—is responsible for the oppression and humiliation of Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen, among other locations.[270]

The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia, as noted in bin Laden's letter to the king, has kept it squarely on the "enemies list" of VSJ adherents. The dynamics of how that

---

[269] bin Laden, "Full Text: bin Laden's 'Letter to America.'"

[270] *The American Muslim Response to Hearings on Radicalization within their Community: Executive Summary and Key Findings*, 2012, https://homeland.house.gov/files/06-20-12-Report.pdf, 14.

country rules its subjects are very complicated, as is its relationship with the U.S. Significant geopolitical issues (e.g., Iran) as well as commercial issues (e.g., oil, sale of military equipment, and promise of defense support) understandably drive much of U.S. strategy in the region. The fact that money from Saudi Arabia is funding the spread of VSJ around the world is an issue that should be addressed in a unified strategy.

The U.S. government's relationship with Israel and the perceived support for its treatment of the Palestinians has been a fact acknowledged not only by U.S. policymakers, but also by VSJ adherents as a reason the U.S. has been attacked. In the painstakingly referenced book, *The Israel Lobby*, Mearsheimer and Walt make the case that prior to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, support for Israel was the major motivation for terror attacks on the U.S. They cite work done by the 9/11 Commission as well as Steven Coll (*Ghost Wars*) in noting that both Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Sheik Mohammed (respectively, the 1993 World Trade Center bomber and the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks) were motivated by U.S. foreign policy in support of Israel.[271]

VSJ represents a *fringe element* of Salafism, which is a *fundamentalist movement within* Sunni Islam. Reference to VSJ terrorism is fraught with poorly defined terms; the vague and unqualified terms "violent extremist" and "religious extremists" tend to be code words that implicate Islam as the culprit, as do "Islamic extremist" or "Islamist radicals,"—all of which miss the mark. Additionally, continuing to define the threat from VSJ as simply AQ or Daesh is also imprecise. As mentioned earlier, organizations come and go, and the names change (and change back) based on political realities.

---

[271] Mearsheimer, and Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, 64–66; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: Norton, 2004), 145, 147.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

VI.   CONCLUSION: STRATEGY—WHAT THE U.S. HAS, WHAT THE U.S. NEEDS

> A good strategy is a coherent plan to tackle a defined problem…it identifies a challenge and sets out a plan for dealing with it.
>
> Richard Rumelt, *Good and Bad Strategy*

National strategies produced by federal agencies are usually characterized by the fact that they set a course for the executive branch to reflect the administration's goals for that agency. These strategies are reviewed and coordinated prior to publication across their respective Department, and then are staffed by the White House for approval. This process ensures that agency strategies do not contradict neither the vision of the sitting administration, nor other agency strategies. The nature of developing broad consensus on strategies (there are comments provided upon review, which are then adjudicated by the author(s)) is that they end up relatively bland; it is rare that a bold concept or exciting initiative is unveiled in a national strategy.

Some strategies, such as the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, are problem focused, which is the approach that Rumelt advocated. However, this thesis argues that the problem needs to be defined with more precise language than "counterterrorism," or "AQ and its affiliates and adherents," to address the VSJ threat. This clear definition of the problem at the national level could pave the way for more creative, innovative, and directive plans to address that problem. The current frame for national strategies that address "counterterrorism" in whole or in part, define an enemy to be fought. The reference to that enemy being "al Qa'ida, its affiliates and adherents" is insufficient, as it makes the group central to the movement, as opposed to the movement being central to that particular (and other) group. Also, focusing on a group does not address the underlying motivation or ideology behind the threat, which is specific: the threat is not from Islam, or Islamists, of even Salafis; it is from *violent Salafi jihadism.*

There is an abundance of literature on strategy but very little that is prescriptive, guaranteed to achieve success. In discussing the numerous definitions for "strategy,"

Mintzberg talks about strategy as a concept, the key significance of which is that it provides and guides a shared perspective. He argues:

> A major issue in the study of strategy formation becomes, therefore, how to read that collective mind—to understand how intentions diffuse through the system called organization to become shared and how actions come to be exercised on a collective yet consistent basis.[272]

The argument for a unified strategy focusing on VSJ would fill the gap that currently exists with regard to that "collective mind" on the issue. In addition, it would focus efforts with the added benefit of a common understanding of the problem in support of a vision to address it.

Currently, there is no precision of language in U.S. national strategies, most of which address terrorism as a tactic.[273] As Jeffrey Record noted early on referencing the GWOT, "Sound strategy mandates threat discrimination and reasonable harmonization of ends and means…[the GWOT] is directed at the phenomenon of terrorism…[and] sets itself up for strategic failure."[274] The phrase commonly used in some of these strategies, "al Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents," gets closer to honing in on the problem than does the other oft-used generic term, "violent extremists." However, a unified strategy would benefit from taking one more step and defining the problem as the movement itself: violent Salafi jihadism. Proposed clarifying language tends to revolve around replacing the generic "violent extremists" with some reference to Islam (understandably rejected by the Secretary of Homeland Security as implicating the entire religion)[275] in U.S. political discourse, which reflects the lack of understanding that (as discussed in the

---

[272] Henry Mintzberg, "The Strategy Concept I: Five Ps for Strategy," *California Management Review* 30, no. 1 (1987): 17.

[273] The DHS 2014 *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* mentions AQ specifically, and then more generally, nuclear terrorism, bioterrorism, lone wolf attacks, climate change and poverty impact on terrorism, terrorism and trade, etc. There is no mention of any particular movement or ideology related to terrorism. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014).

[274] Record, "Bounding the Global War on Terrorism," 22.

[275] "Homeland Secretary Johnson Suggests Term 'Violent Extremism' used at Behest of Muslim Leaders," *Fox News*, February 22, 2015, sec. Politics, http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/02/22/homeland-secretary-johnson-suggests-term-violent-extremism-used-at-behest/.

previous chapters). While the general reference to Islam is not useful and, based on this research, is actually counterproductive to U.S. strategic interests, it does clearly illustrate the need to establish more precise language. Violent Salafi jihadism fits that bill; it very specifically speaks to a small fringe group (not Islam, not Sunni, not even Salafi), the ideology of which explicitly promotes violence to achieve its goals.

According to Rumelt, "A good strategy does more than urge us forward toward a goal or vision; it honestly acknowledges the challenges we face and provides an approach to overcoming them."[276] This brings to mind some of the challenges discussed in this thesis that are politically difficult to address but are essential elements in any national strategy for combatting the VSJ movement. These challenges include U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Israel. Another is the Saudi (government and charities) export of Wahhabi Islam around the world, especially to less stable countries, like those identified as "high threat" by Seth Jones (see Figure 3). A 2003 Congressional Research Service report noted:

> Saudi funding of mosques, madrasas, and charities, some of which have been linked to terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, has raised concern that Wahhabi Islam has been used by militants who tailor this ideology to suit their political goals and who rely on Saudi donations to support their aspirations.[277]

As a result, both the U.S. House and Senate submitted concurrent resolutions:[278]

> (C)alling on the Government of Saudi Arabia to cease supporting religious ideologies that promote hatred, intolerance, violence, and other abuses of internationally recognized human rights and urging the Government of the United States to promote religious freedom in Saudi Arabia.[279]

[276] Richard Rumelt, "The Perils of Bad Strategy," *The McKinsey Quarterly* no. 1 (2011): 30.

[277] Febe Armanios, *The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2003), 6.

[278] *A Concurrent Resolution Calling on the Government of Saudi Arabia to Cease Supporting Religious Ideologies that Promote Hatred, Intolerance, Violence and Other Abuses of Internationally Recognized Human Rights and Urging the Government of the United States to Promote Religious Freedom in Saudi Arabia*, *Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, 108th Cong. (2004), (244), https://www.congress.gov/bill/108th-congress/senate-concurrent-resolution/131.

[279] Ibid.

Both of these resolutions were referred to committee; additional actions on these resolutions were not available.

Figure 3.   Countries of Concern for the United States
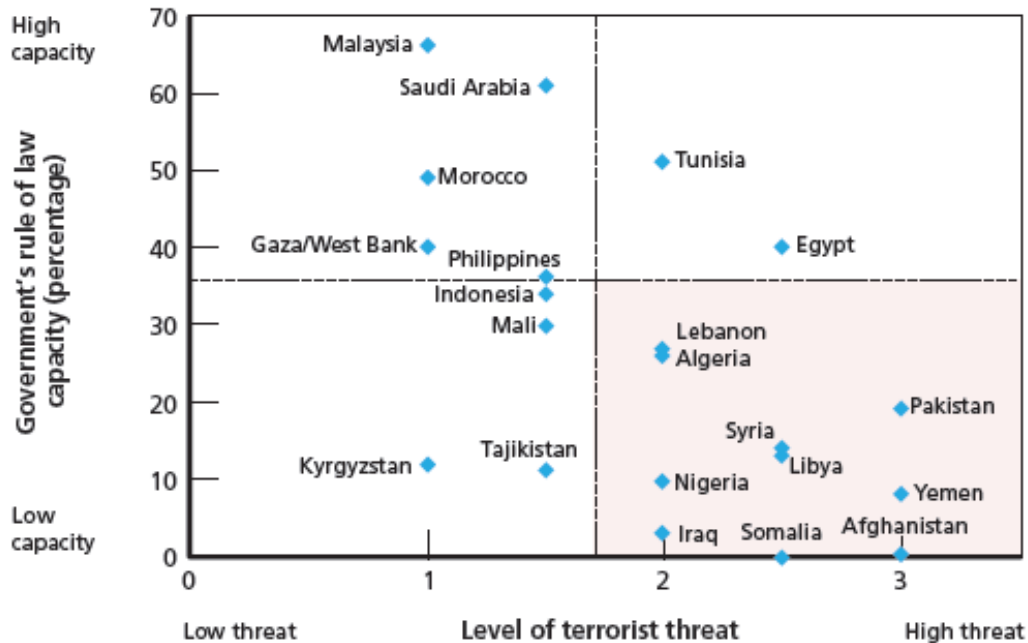
Source: Jones, *A Persistent Threat*, 50.

Among other things, a national vision to combat VSJ should address the management of fear that has gripped the U.S., and the tendency to conflate the threat posed by global VSJ linked to AQ and Daesh with political Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, HAMAS, and Hezbollah and with nation states like Iran, all of which have used terrorist tactics in furtherance of their political goals. This conflation of the threat in lieu of a targeted national strategy addressing VSJ inhibits the ability to focus resources where they are needed and prevents the U.S. from gaining the strategic advantage that could be gained by disaggregating these groups. While each poses unique security challenges and use of terrorist tactics are abhorrent, they represent a different type of threat than does VSJ.

In the RAND report *A Persistent Threat*,[280] there is a long list of VSJ groups that the U.S. can target. Based on groups that have come and gone, and those yet to be identified or created, a unified national strategy would benefit from emphasizing the movement itself and prioritizing groups, as they ebb and flow, that maintain an intent and capability to attack the U.S. While some groups may be long lived, others may be "flash in the pan" or change their name in an effort to affiliate their cause with a more prominent group to suit their own needs. Naming specific groups in a U.S. national strategy provides cache to those groups, elevating the global profile of such groups in that they merit the attention of the most powerful nation on earth. It also misses the mark in identifying that the adversary is broader than any one or two groups; the U.S. should be clear that it will target VSJ wherever that movement threatens national or homeland security. In order to truly focus on the adversary, the U.S. should identify the movement that underlies these groups, no matter what country they are from or what they name their group from one day to the next: VSJ. This is the adversary—not "Islamic radicals," not "Islamists," not "violent extremists," but violent Salafi jihadists.

---

[280] Ibid.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF REFERENCES

Abi-Habib, Maria, and Adam Entous. "U.S. Widens Role in Saudi-Led Campaign against Houthi Rebels in Yemen: Washington has Concerns about Riyadh's Goals in the Conflict." *Wall Street Journal*, April 13, 2015.

Adamec, Ludwig W. *Historical Dictionary of Islam*, Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, no.37. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001.

Alam, Mohammad Shahid. *Challenging the New Orientalism: Dissenting Essays on the War against Islam*. North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 2006.

Al Raffie, Dina. "Whose Hearts and Minds? Narratives and Counter-Narratives of Salafi Jihadism." *Journal of Terrorism Research* 3, no. 2 (2012): 13–31.

Anani, Khalil. "The Salafi-Brotherhood Feud in Egypt." *Al Monitor*, February 21, 2013. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/02/muslim-brotherhood-salafist-feud-in-egypt.html.

Antoun, Richard T. *Understanding Fundamentalism: Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Movements*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2001.

Armanios, Febe. *The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2003.

Ayoob, Mohammed. *The Many Faces of Political Islam*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Bazzi, Mohamad. "Al-Qaeda Becomes a Terror Franchise; Small Jihadist Cells may be Borrowing the Group's 'Brand.'" *Orlando Sentinel*, August 11, 2006.

Baer, Robert. "A Talk with a Suicide Bomber." *Time*, July 20, 2007. http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1645461,00.html.

Bardos, Gordon. "Jihad and the Balkans: The Next Generation." *World Affairs* (September–October 2014). http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/jihad-balkans-next-generation.

Bellavita, Christopher. "Changing Homeland Security: Ten Essential Homeland Security Books." *Homeland Security Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2007): 1–24.

Bhatia, Aditi. "Discursive Illusions in the American National Strategy for Combating Terrorism." *Journal of Language and Politics* 7, no. 2 (2008): 201–227.

Bhatia, Michael V. "Fighting Words: Naming Terrorists, Bandits, Rebels and Other Violent Actors." *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 5–22.

Blanford, Nicholas. "Is al Qaeda About to Expand the 'Field of Jihad' to Lebanon?" *Christian Science Monitor*, February 17, 2014. http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2014/0217/Is-Al-Qaeda-about-to-expand-the-field-of-jihad-to-Lebanon.

Bleich, Erik. "Muslims and the State in the Post 9/11 West: Introduction." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 353–360.

Bowe, Brian J. "The Heartbreak of the Place: Space, Religion and Politics in Post-9/11 Mosque Controversies." *The Muslim World* 103, no. 1 (01, 2013): 181–194.

Brooke, Steven. "The Preacher and the Jihadi." *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 3, (2006): 52–66.

Bulliet, Richard W. "Rhetoric, Discourse, and the Future of Hope." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 588, no. 1 (2003): 10–17.

Byman, Daniel L. "Al-Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand our Enemy?" *World Politics* 56, no. 1 (2003): 139–163.

Chappell, Bill. "World's Muslim Population Will Surpass Christians this Century, Pew Says." *National Public Radio*, April 2, 2015. http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/04/02/397042004/muslim-population-will-surpass-christians-this-century-pew-says.

Chrisafis, Angelique, Patrick Kingsley, and Peter Beaumont. "World: The Violent Tide of Salafism That is Threatening the Arab Spring: A Series of Repressive Dictatorships Have Been Brought Down in North Africa, but the Ensuing Struggles for Power Have Left a Vacuum that has Allowed the Rise of an Extremist Movement that is Gathering Both Force and Supporters." *The Observer*, February 10, 2013.

Ciluffo, Frank, and Lee Hamilton, *Report of the Future of Terrorism Task Force*. Washington, DC: Homeland Security Advisory Council, 2007.

Coll, Steve. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2004. Kindle edition.

Comey, James. "The Complexity of Today's Global Threat Environment." July 22, 2015, You Tube video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RyVXLKO0DM.

Crooke, Alastair. "You Can't Understand ISIS if You Don't Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia." *Huffington Post Online*, August 27, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html.

Cronin, Audrey Kurth. "The Evolution of Counter-Terrorism: Will Tactics Trump Strategy?" *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 86, no. 4 (2010): 837–856.

Crenshaw, Martha. "A Welcome Antidote." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17 (spring–summer 2005): 517–521.

Davis, Paul B., and Leonard B. Weinberg. *Introduction to Political Terrorism*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989.

Dobbins, James F., Ellen Laipson, Helena Cobban, and Lawrence J. Korb. "Withdrawal from Iraq: What are the Regional Implications?" *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 3 (2009): 1–27.

Emerson, Steven. "Terrorism in America: The Threat of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism." In *The Future of Terrorism*, edited by Harvey W. Kushner (33–54). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998.

Esposito, John, ed. *The Oxford History of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

———. *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Farer, Tom J. *Confronting Global Terrorism and American Neo-Conservatism: The Framework of a Liberal Grand Strategy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Firro, Tarik K. "The Political Context of Early Wahhabi Discourse of Takfir." *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 5 (2013): 770–789.

Fournier, Louis. *F.L.Q: The Anatomy of an Underground Movement*. Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1984.

Friedman, Benjamin, Jim Harper, and Christopher A. Preble. *Terrorizing Ourselves: Why U.S. Counterterrorism Policy is Failing and How to Fix It*. Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2010.

Fuller, Graham E. *The Future of Political Islam*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Gage, Beverly. "Terrorism and the American Experience: A State of the Field." *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (2011): 18–19, 73–94.

Gerges, Fawaz A. *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Glueck, William F. *Business Policy and Strategic Management*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980.

Gonzalez, Nathan. *The Sunni-Shia Conflict: Understanding Sectarian Violence in the Middle East*. Mission Viejo, CA: Nortia Press, 2009.

Green, Stephen. "Serving Two Flags: Neocons, Israel and the Bush Administration." *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 23, no. 4 (2004): 20–23.

Government Accountability Office. *Countering Violent Extremism: Additional Actions could Strengthen Training Efforts* (GAO-13-79). Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2012.

Halverson, Jeffrey R., H. Lloyd Goodall Jr., and Steven R. Corman, eds. *Master Narratives of Islamic Extremism*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

Hearn, Dana. "AIPAC Policy Conference, 21–23 April 2002." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, no. 4 (2002): 66–70.

Hećimović, Esad. "Radical Movements: A Challenge for Moderate Balkan-Islam?" *Austrian Armed Forces* (August 2008). http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/rel_exterm_vs_fried_beweg_05_radical_movements_moderate_balkan_islam_e_hecimovic_17.pdf.

Jackson, Richard. "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse." *Government and Opposition* 24, no 3, 42 (2007): 394–426.

Johnson, Kevin. "ISIL's Sophisticated Recruiting Campaign Poses Persistent Threat in U.S." *USA Today*, April 26, 2015.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Counterterrorism* (Joint Publication 3-26). Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014.

———. *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Anti-Terrorism* (Joint Publication 3–07.2). Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014.

———. *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015*. Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015.

Jones, Seth G. *A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of Al Qa'ida and Other Salafi Jihadists*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2014). http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR637.

———. "Think Again: Al Qaeda." *Foreign Policy*, no. 193 (May–June, 2012):

Kamiya, Gary. "Why We Can't Win the War on Terror." Salon. September 15, 2006. http://www.salon.com/2006/09/15/richardson_13.

Kepel, Gilles. *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.

Kepel, Gilles, and Anthony F. Roberts. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Cambridge, MA: I. B. Tauris, 2002.

Krauthammer, Charles. "Fruit of Arab Spring is Islamism." *The Charleston Gazette*, July 14, 2012. A.5.

Lacroix, Stephane. "Sheikhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism." Brookings Doha Center. July 2012. http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/06/07-egyptian-salafism-lacroix.

Livesey, Bruce. "The Salafist Movement." *PBS/Frontline*. January 25, 2005. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/special/sala.html.

Lappin, Yaakov. "US Police Officials in Israel for Counter-Terrorism Program." *The Jerusalem Post*, October 31, 2011, sec. Diplomacy and Politics.

Marret, Jean-Luc. "Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A 'Glocal' Organization." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): 541–552.

Marsella, Anthony J., and Fathali M. Moghaddam. "The Origins and Nature of Terrorism: Foundations and Issues." *The Trauma of Terrorism: Sharing Knowledge and Shared Care, an International Handbook*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Maltreatment & Trauma Press, 2004.

Martin, Liam, and M. L. R. Smith. "Every Kingdom Divided against Itself Will be Ruined: A Reflection, a Deflection and a Qualified Reinterpretation of the New Global Jihad." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34, no. 9 (2011): 672–695.

Maslow, Abraham H. *The Psychology of Science*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

McAllister, Brad. "Al Qaeda and the Innovative Firm: Demythologizing the Network." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (2004): 297–319.

McCarthy, Justin. "In U.S., Worries about Terrorism, Race Relations up Sharply." Gallup. March 17, 2015. http://www.gallup.com/poll/182018/worries-terrorism-race-relations-sharply.aspx.

McKee, Alan. *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide*. London: SAGE Publications, 2003.

Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Macmillan, 2007. Kindle edition.

Mintzberg, Henry. "The Strategy Concept I: Five Ps for Strategy." *California Management Review* 30, no. 1 (1987): 11–25.

Moghadam, Assaf. "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks." *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2008): 46–78.

———. "The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology." *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 3 (2008): 14–16.

Morag, Nadav. "Measuring Success in Coping with Terrorism: The Israeli Case." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 4 (2005): 307–320.

Moussalli, Ahmad. *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who is the Enemy?* Conflicts Forum. 2009. http://conflictsforum.org/briefings/Wahhabism-Salafism-and-Islamism.pdf.

Mueller, John, and Mark G. Stewart. "The Terrorism Delusion: America's Overwrought Response to September 11." *International Security* 37, no. 1 (2012): 81–110.

Nash, Jay Robert. *Terrorism in the 20th Century: A Narrative Encyclopedia from the Anarchists through the Weathermen to the Unabomber*. New York: M. Evans and Co, 1998.

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. *The 9/ 11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. New York: Norton, 2004.

———. "National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States: Transcript of Rice's 9/11 Commission Statement." April 8, 2004. http://www.9-11commission.gov/archive/hearing9/9-11Commission_Hearing_2004-04-08.htm.

National Intelligence Council. *The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland*. Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council, 2007.

Nonneman, Gerd. "State of the Art, Rentiers, Monarchs and Democrats, State and Society: The Middle East between Globalization, Human "Agency" and Europe." *International Affairs* 77, no. 1 (2001): 141–162.

O'Neill, Thomas P. and Gary Hymel. *All Politics is Local*. New York: Adams Media, 1994.

Phillip, Andrew. "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2009).

Pillar, Paul. *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001.

Porter, Wayne, and Mark Mykleby. *A National Strategic Narrative*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2011.

Powell, Michael. "In Police Training: A Dark Film on Muslims." *New York Times*, January 23, 2012, sec. New York Region.

Puri, Luv. "The Past and Future of Deobandi Islam." *The CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 11 (2009): 19–22.

Rahme, Joseph G. "Ethnocentric and Stereotypical Concepts in the Study of Islamic and World History." *The History Teacher* 32, no. 4 (1999): 473–494.

Raufer, Xavier. "Al Qaeda: A Different Diagnosis." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 6 (2003): 391–398.

Record, Jeffrey. "Bounding the Global War on Terrorism." *Military Technology* 28, no. 6 (2004): 17–33.

Rineheart, Jason. "Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, no. 5 (2010): 31–47.

Rohde, David. "Obama's Counterterrorism Doctrine: Let Locals Lead the Fight." Reuters, June 4, 2014, sec. World.

Roy, Olivier. *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. London: Hurst & Co., 2004.

———. "Islam and Foreign Policy: Central Asia and the Arab-Persian World." In *History of Pakistan and Its Origins*, edited by Christophe Jaffrelot (134–148). London: Anthem Press, 2004.

Roy, Olivier, Antoine Sfeir, and John King. *The Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Rumelt, Richard. "The Perils of Bad Strategy." *The McKinsey Quarterly* no. 1 (2011).

Saab, Bilal Y., and Magnus Ranstorp. "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 10 (2007): 825–855.

Sageman, Marc. *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Said, Edward. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

Savage, Charlie, and Jonathan Weisman. "N.S.A Collection of Bulk Call Data is Ruled Illegal." *New York Times*, May 7, 2015, sec. Politics.

S. B. "What is the Difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims?" *The Economist*, May 28, 2013.

Schachter, Jonathan M. "The Eye of the Believer: Psychological Influences on Counter-Terrorism Policy-Makers." Dissertation, RAND Graduate School, 2002.

Shah, Idries. *The Sufis*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971.

Singh, Rashmi. "Measuring 'Al-Qaeda:' The Metrics of Terror." In *Knowing Al-Qaeda: The Epistemology of Terrorism*, edited by Christina Hellmich, and Andreas Behnke (1–28). London: Ashgate, 2012.

Southwick, Albert B. "When Religions Split, There's always Trouble Ahead." *Telegram & Gazette*, June 18, 2006.

Stern, Andrew. "Numbers of Muslims, Mormons Rising Sharply: Report." Reuters, May 1, 2012. http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/01/us-usa-religion-census-idUSBRE8401NK20120501.

Stevenson, Jonathan. "Pragmatic Counter-Terrorism." *Survival* 43, no. 4 (2001): 35–48.

Strindberg, Anders, and Mats Wärn. *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization and Resistance*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011.

Stokes, Bruce. "Next Steps on Terrorism? No Consensus." *National Journal* 37, no. 37 (2005): 2764–2765.

Syed, Aslam. "Viewing Islam through Dark Clouds." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588 (July 2003): 194–201.

Trofimov, Yaroslav. *Faith at War: A Journey on the Frontlines of Islam, from Baghdad to Timbuktu*. New York: Picador, 2005.

———. *The Siege of Mecca: The 1979 Uprising at Islam's Holiest Shrine*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.

Tziampiris, Aristotle. "Assessing Islamic Terrorism in the Western Balkans: The State of the Debate." *Journal of Balkan & Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 2 (2009): 209–219.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Countering Violent Extremism Training*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, 2011. http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cve-training-guidance.pdf.

———. *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan*. Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security Office of Policy, 2012.

———. *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. *Terminology to Define the Terrorists: Recommendations from American Muslims*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008.

U.S. Department of State. *United States Department of State Strategic Plan, 2014–2017*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2014.

van Creveld, Martin. *The Transformation of War*. New York: The Free Press, 1991.

Wagemakers, Joas. "Framing the "Threat to Islam": Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara' in Salafi Discourse." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2008): 1–22.

White House. *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. Washington, DC: White House, 2011.

———. *The National Strategy for Combatting Terrorism*. Washington, DC: White House, 2002.

———. *National Strategy for Countering Terrorism*. Washington, DC: White House, 2003.

———. *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*. Washington, DC: White House, 2011.

———. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, DC: White House, 2015.

———. *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. Washington, DC: White House, 2011.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 207–239.

———. "The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad." *Middle East Policy* 8, no. 4 (2001): 18–38.

Williams, Bryan Glyn. "Jihad and Ethnicity in Post-Communist Eurasia: On the Trail of Transnational Islamic Holy Warriors in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Chechnya and Kosovo." *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 2, no. 3–4 (2003): 3–24.

Yousef, Ayman Talal. "Stereotyping Islam in Western Perceptions between Fundamentalism and Phobia: Analytical and Critical Reading." *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* 1 no. 1 (2013): 12–26.

Zeitlin, Steve. "Talking Points." *Voices* 34, no. 1 (spring 2008): 11.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1.   Defense Technical Information Center
        Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2.   Dudley Knox Library
        Naval Postgraduate School
        Monterey, California